



Social media policy template for general practices



The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) has developed a social media policy template for general practices. In a general practice, staff and patients are likely to be using social media to communicate internally or externally. It is important that each practice uses this template as a guide only and adapts its content to their individual procedures. This policy provides guidance for general practitioners (GPs) and general practice staff on the use of social media in compliance with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency's (AHPRA's) social media policy.

This template covers:

- the definition of social media
- codes of conduct for using the practice's social media platforms
- privacy and security
- staff responsibilities
- codes of conduct for staff using personal social media platforms.

The template is designed to communicate the practice's policies on the use of social media in the practice. The sections in **red text** are for you to revise and adapt to the specific procedures of your general practice.

This policy should be reviewed regularly to ensure it remains applicable to current practice procedure and legal requirements.

Southern Highlands GP After Hours Service

social media policy

Current as of: 20/8/2025

Name of social media officer: Angela Parrett

Introduction

This policy provides guidance for members of the practice on using social media internally and externally. The policy helps identify and mitigate risks associated with social media use.

Definition

For the purposes of this policy, 'social media' is online social networks used to disseminate information through online interaction.

For the purposes of this policy, the following definitions apply:

Social Media includes all internet-based publishing technologies. Most forms of Social Media are interactive, allowing authors, readers and publishers to connect and interact with one another. The published material can often be accessed by anyone. Forms of Social Media include, but are not limited to, social or business networking sites (e.g. Facebook, LinkedIn), video and/or photo sharing websites (e.g.. YouTube, Instagram), business/corporate and personal blogs, micro-blogs (e.g. Twitter), chat rooms and forums and/or Social Media:

Purpose

Regardless of whether social media is used for business-related activity or for personal reasons, the following policy requirements apply to all GPs and practice staff of SHGPAHS. GPs and practice staff are legally responsible for their online activities, and if found to be in breach of this policy may be subject to liability and disciplinary action including termination of employment or contract

Use of practice social media accounts

The SHGPAHS has appointed the Angela Parrett as the social media officer responsible for managing and monitoring the practice's social media accounts. All posts on SHGPAHS social media website must be approved by the coordinator. The SHGPAHS reserves the right to remove any content at its own discretion.

Staff conduct on social media

When using SHGPAHS's social media, practice staff will not:

- post any material that
 - is unlawful, threatening, defamatory, pornographic, inflammatory, menacing or offensive
 - infringes or breaches another person's rights (including intellectual property rights) or privacy, or misuses the practice's or another person's confidential information (eg do not submit confidential information relating to our patients, personal information of staff, or information concerning the practice's business operations that have not been made public)
 - is materially damaging or could be materially damaging to the practice's reputation or image, or another individual
 - is in breach of any of the practice's policies or procedures
- use social media to send unsolicited commercial electronic messages, or solicit other users to buy or sell products or services or donate money

- impersonate another person or entity (eg by pretending to be someone else or another practice employee or other participant when you submit a contribution to social media) or by using another's registration identifier without permission
- tamper with, hinder the operation of, or make unauthorised changes to the social media sites
- knowingly transmit any virus or other disabling feature to or via the practice's social media account, or use in any email to a third party, or the social media site
- attempt to do or permit another person to do any of these things
 - claim or imply that you are speaking on the practice's behalf, unless you are authorised to do so
 - disclose any information that is confidential or proprietary to the practice, or to any third party that has disclosed information to the practice
- be defamatory, harassing or in violation of any other applicable law
- include confidential or copyrighted information (eg music, videos, text belonging to third parties)
- violate any other applicable policy of the practice.

Monitoring social media sites

The practice's social media channels are part of our customer service and should be monitored and dealt with regularly.

The coordinator will monitor our social media accounts, respond to enquires or complaints & update content weekly at a minimum, or as required.

Testimonials

The practice complies with AHPRA national law and takes reasonable steps to remove testimonials that advertise their health services (which may include comments about the practitioners themselves). The practice is not responsible for removing (or trying to have removed) unsolicited testimonials published on a third-party website or in social media accounts over which they do not have control.

Personal social media use

Staff are free to personally engage in social media outside of work hours, as long as their actions do not have the potential to bring the SHGPAHS into disrepute. Employees may not represent personal views expressed as those of this practice.

Any social media posts by staff on their personal social media platforms must not reveal confidential information about SHGPAHS or a person who uses the after hours service (eg staff should not post information relating to patients or other staff, or information concerning SHGPAHS's business operations that have not been made public).

Staff should respect copyright, privacy, fair use, financial disclosure and other applicable laws when publishing on social media platforms.

Employees and contractors' personal social media sites:

- Do not identify yourself as working for or at the practice.
- Do not refer to the practice, other staff or contractors without their approval. Do not criticise or denigrate the practice, its staff and contractors, or organisations it is professionally associated with.
- There should be no photos taken inside the workplace which could capture documents, paperwork, patient charts, or other information protected by privacy law. Do not disclose any patient information without the express consent of the patient.
- Do not accept "friend" requests from people you know only as a patient of the practice.
- Do not disclose any confidential information relating to practice systems.
- Use of social media should not interfere with your work.

When accessing social media while at work, you must do so in accordance with SHGPAHS Internet and Email Usage policies, which requires you to use these resources reasonably, in a manner that does not interfere with

your work and is not inappropriate or excessively accessed.

Examples of reasonable use include:

- Accessing Facebook during an official break time
- Replying to a family member's email
- Paying bills online during a meal break

It does not include promoting personal business or private enterprises

Breach of policy

All social media activities must be in line with this policy.

SHGPAHS reserves the right to initiate action against any staff member, in accordance with the organisation's Disciplinary Procedure, who uses social media in a manner that could be considered inappropriate or not consistent with this policy or any other SHGPAHS policy.

Management will consider the nature and severity of the post, the source of the post, whether SHGPAHS was named, if the post is public, if other co-workers have seen the post, if SHGPAHS or the Health industry has been damaged, and or if the comment was impulsive or deliberate when considering any disciplinary action.

Disciplinary action in the event of a serious misconduct may include termination of employment or disengagement of external contractors.

DISCLOSURE OF INAPPROPRIATE USE

Where an employee becomes aware of inappropriate or unlawful online content that relates to SHGPAHS, or content that may otherwise have been published in breach of this policy the situation and circumstances should be reported immediately to the Practice Manager.

Policy review statement

This policy will be reviewed annually & when required to ensure it is up to date with changes in social media or relevant legislation. Team members will be notified if there are any changes made to this policy.

Disclaimer

The 'Social media policy template for general practices' is intended for use as a guide of a general nature only and may or may not be relevant to your particular practices or circumstances. The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) has used its best endeavours to ensure the template is adapted for general practice to address current and anticipated future social media requirements. Persons adopting or implementing its procedures or recommendations should exercise their own independent skill or judgement, or seek appropriate professional advice. While the template is directed to general practice, it does not ensure compliance with any privacy laws, and cannot of itself guarantee discharge of the duty of care owed to patients. Accordingly, the RACGP disclaims all liability (including negligence) to any users of the information contained in this template for any loss or damage (consequential or otherwise), cost or expense incurred or arising by reason of reliance on the template in any manner.

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