Navigating Social Media in Healthcare: Implications, Challenges, and Guidelines for Physicians

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Background

❖ Social media has become an integral part of professional interactions in healthcare (Ventola 2014)
❖ 1400% Increase in the use of social media among US citizens from 2005 to 2020 (Farso, 2021)
❖ Benefits and challenges exist for social media use in healthcare; however, there is a need for social media guidelines for physicians
❖ Physicians are not aware of their organization's social media policy (Chan et al. 2020)

Figure 1. Medline Learning Group's Frontline Digital Campaign in raising medical awareness during pandemic (Admin, 2023)

Objectives

❖ Identifying the multifaceted implications, challenges, and ethical dilemmas faced by physicians, resident physicians, and medical students engaged in social media
❖ To emphasize the need for social media policies to protect and serve patients and physicians
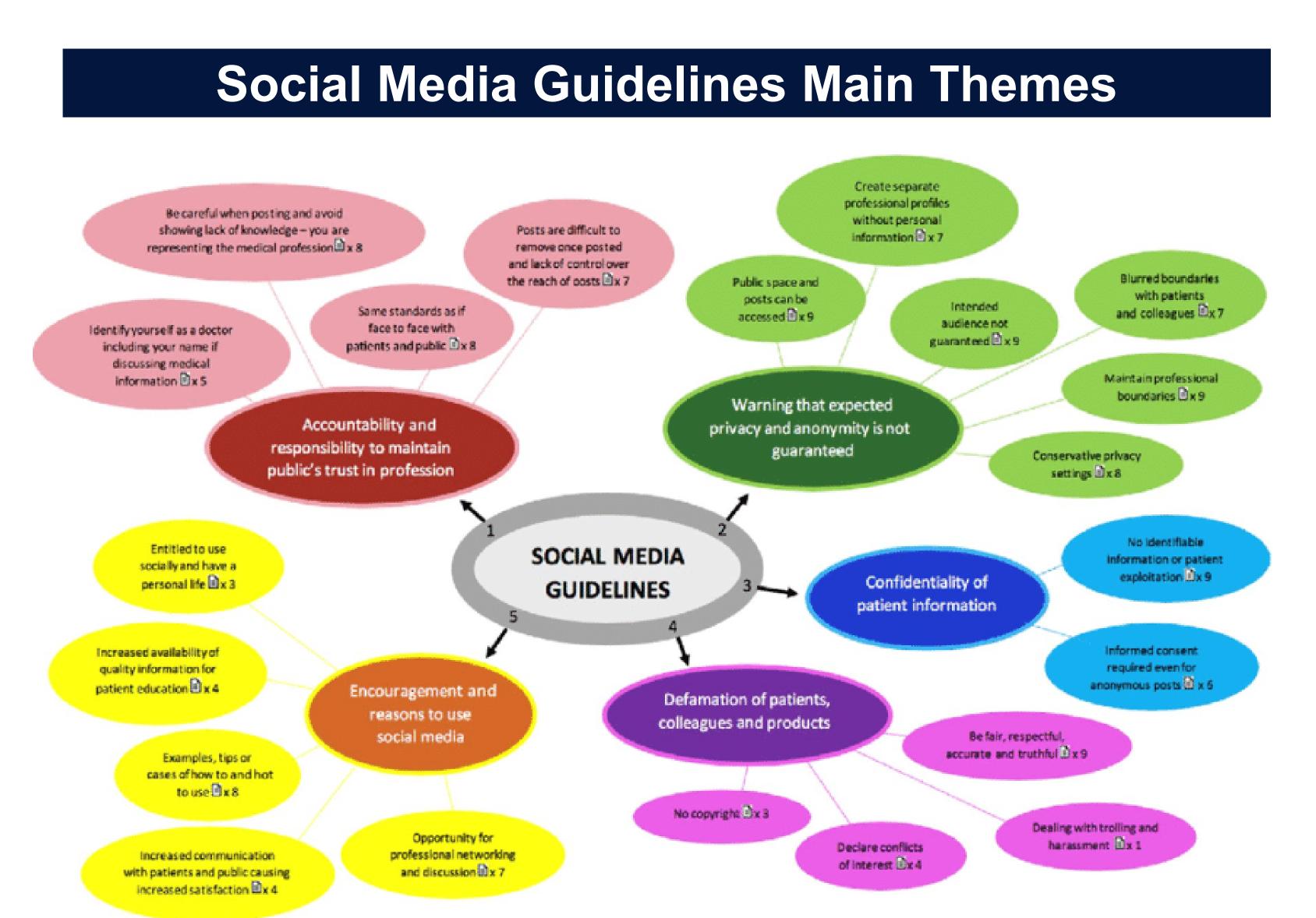❖ To share some relevant key points pertaining to social media guidelines in our institution

Benefits of Social Media

❖ Enhanced Communication between Healthcare Professionals and Patient Population
❖ Efficient Dissemination of Medical Knowledge
❖ Fostering of a Global Medical Community

Challenges of Social Media

❖ Exposure of Patient Privacy due to Poor Adherence of Social Media Policy
❖ Compromisation of Professionalism and Ethics
❖ Incongruence between Personal and Professional online presence

Social Media Guidelines Main Themes

Figure 2. Schematic diagram outlining important themes found in social media (Hennessy, CM et al. 2019)

Figure 3: Wordpress Compilation of words closely associated with social media (Anan, 2017)

Call to Action

❖ Promoting widespread social media use can facilitate networking and communication among medical professionals in patient care to raise public health awareness and solve problems collaboratively.
❖ It is vital to balance the risks and benefits of social media use to develop an effective protocol for long-term use.
❖ Institutions need to create and/or adapt social media guidelines to the fast paced evolving digital era landscape.

Key Takeaways For HCA Employees

❖ There are social media guidelines in place.
❖ Do not talk on behalf of the institution unless you have been officially contacted to do so. Add a disclaimer explaining the views are your own in posts that may link you to the company.
❖ Do not fall for the "anonymity fallacy". Pause and think.
❖ Doctor-patient relationship: set of obligations that supersede personal interest
❖ Further analysis is necessary to understand the consequences of the transformative effects of social media platforms on medical-professional interactions.

Table 1. Principles That Guide the ACP Ethics Manual Recommendations

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Principle	Description
Beneficence	The duty to promote good and act in the best interest of the patient
Nonmaleficence	The duty to do no harm to the patient
Respect for patient autonomy	The duty to protect and foster a patient's free, uncoerced choices
Justice	The equitable distribution of the life-enhancing opportunities afforded by health care

Figure 4: Principles That Guide the ACP Ethics Manual Recommendations.

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