

AMERICAN NURSES ASSOCIATION

- FACT SHEET -

Navigating the World of Social Media

The number of individuals using social networking sites such as Facebook, Twitter, LinkedIn, and YouTube is growing at an astounding rate. Facebook reports that over 10% of the world's population has a Facebook presence while Twitter manages more than 140 million Tweets daily. Nurses are making connections using social media. Recently, the College of Nurses of Ontario reported that 60% of Ontario's nurses engage in social networking (2010).

Social networks are defined as "web-based services that allow individuals to 1) construct a public or semi-public profile within a bounded system, 2) articulate a list of other users with whom they share a connection, and 3) view and traverse their lists of connections and those made by others within the system (Boyd and Ellison, 2007).

These online networks offer opportunities for rapid knowledge exchange and dissemination among many people, although this exchange does not come without risk. Nurses and nursing students have an obligation to understand the nature, benefits, and consequences of participating in social networking of all types. Online content and behavior has the potential to either enhance or undermine not only the individual nurse's career, but also the nursing profession.

Benefits

- Networking and nurturing relationships
- Exchange of knowledge and forum for collegial interchange
- Dissemination and discussion of nursing and health related education, research, best practices
- Educating the public on nursing and health related matters

Risks

- Information can take on a life of its own where inaccuracies become "fact"
- Patient privacy can be breached
- The public's trust of nurses can be compromised
- Individual nursing careers can be undermined

ANA's Principles for Social Networking

1. Nurses must not transmit or place online individually identifiable patient information.
2. Nurses must observe ethically prescribed professional patient — nurse boundaries.
3. Nurses should understand that patients, colleagues, institutions and employers may view postings.
4. Nurses should take advantage of privacy settings and seek to separate personal and professional information online.
5. Nurses should bring content that could harm a patient's privacy, rights, or welfare to the attention of appropriate authorities.
6. Nurses should participate in developing institutional policies governing online conduct.

References

- Anderson, J., & Puckrin, K. (2011). Social network use: A test of self-regulation. *Journal of Nursing Regulation*, 2(1), 36-41.
- Boyd, S., & Ellison, N.B. (2007). Social network sites: Definition, history, and scholarship. *Journal of Computer Mediated Communication*, 13(1), 210-230.



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