

Social media in general practice

Dr Timothy Senior



RACGP

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners

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What is social media?

The Macquarie Dictionary defines social media as 'online social networks used to disseminate information through online social interaction'. Social media allows individuals to communicate with others, access information, and share knowledge, experience and expertise on topics of interest.

What will you get out of today's webinar?

An understanding of how these social media platforms can be used in general practice:

- Facebook
- Twitter
- LinkedIn
- Blogs



What will you get out of today's webinar?

We will explore the topics:

- importance of having a social media policy
- security and privacy
- staff roles and responsibilities

20-30 minutes live interview with Dr Tim Koh

Setting the scene



What is LinkedIn?



- online professional directory of individuals and companies
- currently the largest professional network worldwide, with 300 million members around the world.
- individuals use LinkedIn for professional networking, connecting, and job searching.

Advantages of using LinkedIn in general practice

- search for jobs/list employment opportunities
- research companies
- join groups and expand your network, have online discussions
- build a curriculum vitae
- share articles of interest to others across your professional community





Tips for using LinkedIn

- choose an appropriate profile picture that creates a professional impression
- choose who you would like to connect with
- the 'Projects' function allows you to add current and past projects that you have developed and contributed to throughout your career
- it is recommended not to connect with patients (current/former/prospective)





Security in social media



GPs and general practice staff need to secure:

- computers
- digital technologies
- internet and wi-fi connections

This ensures that your practice is protected against potential exposure to unauthorised access and theft or loss of personal information.

RACGP's *Computer information and security standards (2nd edition)*

<http://www.racgp.org.au/your-practice/standards/computer-and-information-security-standards/>

Roles and responsibilities

If you decide to use social media for your practice, we recommended that you assign a staff member to manage the tasks of updating and maintaining your online information.

You should document and clearly define this role in your practice's social media policy.



Social media policy

Consider developing a practice code of conduct for the use of social media which reflects *the Medical Board of Australia's Good medical practice: a code of conduct for doctors in Australia*.

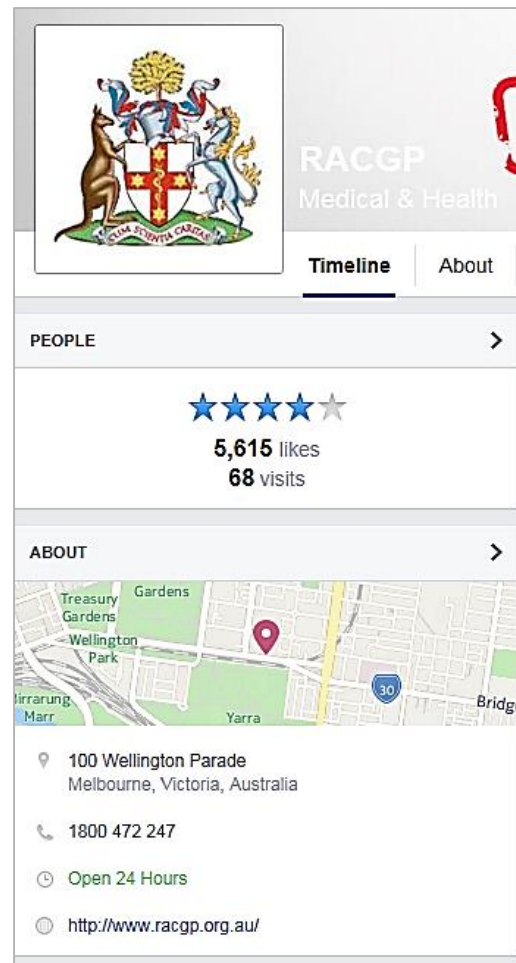
The RACGP social media policy template within the Guide, can be adapted to your practice.

<http://www.racgp.org.au/your-practice/ehealth/social-media/>



Facebook business page – star rating

The *MBA Guidelines for advertising regulated health services* states that: ‘practitioners are not responsible for removing (or trying to have removed) unsolicited testimonials published on a website or in social media over which they do not have control’.





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Disclaimers

Example of disclaimer for a business page:

'This account reflects the general practice views and not that of any businesses/committees/boards that staff are involved in.'

Example of a disclaimer on a personal page:

'This account reflects (name) views and not that of any businesses/committees/boards that he/she is a part of.'



The image shows a screenshot of a Twitter profile for Tim Senior. The header is blue with the Twitter logo, a search icon, and links for 'Log in' and 'Sign up'. The profile picture shows a man with grey hair and a beard. The name 'Tim Senior' is bold, followed by the handle '@timsenior' and the location 'Tharawal Nation, Australia'. The bio reads: 'GP in Aboriginal health & medical education. Find stuff interesting, like environments that keep us well. And violas. Opinions could be mine, aren't employers'. Below the bio is a link: 'iofthet.blogspot.com.au/p/blog-page.ht...'. At the bottom, there are three boxes showing statistics: 30,664 TWEETS, 2,383 FOLLOWING, and 5,618 FOLLOWERS.

30,664 TWEETS	2,383 FOLLOWING	5,618 FOLLOWERS
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Advantages of using Facebook

- engage and communicate directly with patients and colleagues
- provides another avenue for patients to find you
- drive traffic to your general practice's website
- a way for you to build your network with other professionals
- create groups for like-minded people to join and build discussions



Tips for using Facebook

- customise your Facebook privacy settings
- educate staff on social media privacy settings and encourage them to think about who they are sharing their information with
- Facebook instant messaging feature: there are a number of risks involved in directly communicating with patients via social media
- clearly define the role of the staff member assigned to the task of updating and maintaining the information online in the practice's social media policy

Instant messaging



Risks include:

- breach patient privacy and confidentiality, unless a patient has provided consent to being contacted by this means
- It is not a secure line of communication, as the information being sent is not encrypted

We recommend you never use the messaging feature to provide or discuss any health information due to this inherent lack of security and inability to verify recipients

Twitter

@drjsingh2015



What is Twitter?



- online social networking and micro-blogging service
- available for everyone to read but only registered users can also post tweets



Twitter can be a useful social media tool in general practice as it provides a way to stay in touch with colleagues and follow people and organisations that interest you.

Advantages of using Twitter

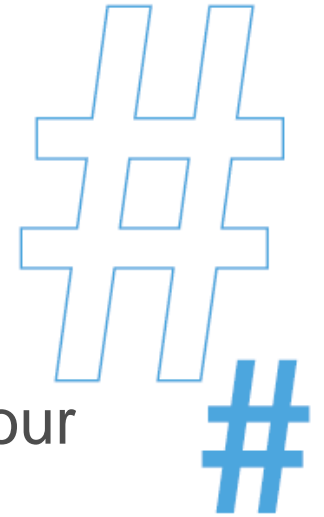
- share information about your practice, be part of conversations, provide useful information and start to build a community
- your tweets can include a link to other web content or a photograph or video
- choose who you want to 'follow'
- follow and participate in conversations at conferences, using hashtags (eg. #GP15melb)



Using Twitter at conferences

- Twitter allows delegates to make comments and suggestion over live Twitter feeds that are often displayed on a big screen
- Twitter can be used to ask questions in major plenaries
- always be mindful of what you write on these types of Twitter posts as they are publicly broadcast at events and on the internet

Tips for using Twitter



- reflect the brand of your practice
- follow people who could have an impact on your business
- use it to direct traffic to your website or blog
- maintain professionalism when using Twitter
- do not re-tweet testimonials made by others (regarding you as a GP, your general practice or health service)
- tweet regularly.

What is a blog?



- a blog (weblog) is a website that features a diary-type annotation and links to articles on other websites
- used for businesses or personal use and can focus on a particular topic or a range of topics
- a general practice or a GP could have a blog and write about their practice, the health sector and health-related issues that they are interested in

How to blog?

- choose the target audience and a topic to blog about
- choose to have a including free blog or a self-hosted blog via a paid website domain
- choose a design that reflects the image and branding of your general practice
- assign a staff member to the task of updating and maintaining the practice's blog (define this role in the social media policy)

The benefits of starting a blog

- establish your blog as a place where people know to return to gain knowledge on certain subjects
- promote and share your blog on other social media platforms this enables you to expand your network and reach other healthcare professionals
- an engaging blog is one that educates and inspires your readers
- use your blog to establish your online identity

Tips for blogging



- be prepared for complaints and learn how to manage them
- we recommend that you have a protocol or practice policy on managing and monitoring the content and feedback of your blog
- consider adding to your practice blog disclaimer that your blog is not a place for patients to ask clinical questions

Don't forget privacy because social media is public

Section 3.4 *Confidentiality and privacy* of the Medical Board of Australia's *Good medical practice: a code of conduct for doctors in Australia* states that you should be:

'ensuring that your use of social media is consistent with your ethical and legal obligations to protect patient confidentiality and privacy.'

RACGP's *Handbook for the management of health information in general practice*

<http://www.racgp.org.au/your-practice/ehealth/protecting-information/privacy/>

Summary

- Don't Lie, Don't Pry
- Don't Cheat, Can't Delete
- Don't Steal, Don't Reveal

A 12-Word Social Media Policy - Mayo Clinic Center for Social Media

<http://socialmedia.mayoclinic.org/discussion/a-12-word-social-media-policy/>

Useful resources

RACGP Resources

- Guide for the use of social media in general practice
- Computer and Information Security Standards 2nd edition
- Handbook for the management of health information in general practice
- Secure communications in general practice
- Digital Business Kits – Module 4.2 Social media
- Good Practice article, *Stay connected* – in the September edition of GP

Other resources

- AHPRA Guidelines for advertising regulated health services
- AMA Social media and the medical profession guide

<http://www.racgp.org.au/your-practice/ehealth/social-media/useful-resources/>

RACGP Guide for the use of social media in general practice

<http://www.racgp.org.au/your-practice/ehealth/social-media/guide/>



The good GP never stops learning.

