

Policy Applies to:

All members of staff employed by Mercy Hospital, Credentialed Specialists and Allied Health Professionals compliance will be facilitated by staff.

Rationale:

Mercy Hospital is committed to the protection of patient privacy, public trust and confidentiality at all times. This policy refers to personal and professional social media use where there is;

- Information shared on social media in the name of Mercy Hospital
- Information shared on social media in a personal context by Mercy hospital staff (where Mercy Hospital's reputation or the professional reputation of the staff member could be compromised)

Definitions:

'**Social media**' describes interactive web or internet based technologies that allow individuals and communities to create and exchange information in real time. Social media includes platforms such as Twitter, LinkedIn and Facebook (social networking) or forums such as blog and wall-postings that allow the sharing of information, photographs and video. Social media allows for active and immediate dialogue.

'**Electronic media**' describes media that use electronics to access content e.g. video or audio recordings, multimedia presentations or online content. Extends to any equipment used in electronic communication e.g. television, radio, telephone, desktop computer, may also be considered electronic media.

Objectives:

1. Provide guidance on the appropriate use and management of social media
2. Protect Patient and Staff privacy and confidentiality, preventing the disclosure of personal or employer information
3. Ensure that Mercy Hospital complies with current legal and professional regulations and standards
4. Uphold the reputation of Mercy Hospital and mitigate privacy risks.

Implementation:

- Mercy Hospital has an E-mail and Internet Standard (Appendix 3 of the ICT governance policy) which outlines the organisation's expectations for proper usage of e-mail and internet. Staff are required to sign the standard prior to commencement of employment
- The Social Media Policy will be outlined at new staff orientation, within the ICT session
- Social media is discussed at clinical orientation within the 'Code of Conduct' session for new staff

- Mercy Hospital's official social media profiles content is reviewed regularly by the designated owner.

Evaluation:

The effectiveness of this Policy will be reviewed by:

- Patient complaints
- Incident reports

Associated Documents

External

- NZNO (2012) Guidelines: Professional Boundaries, 1-36.
- NZNO, NZNO Student Unit and Nurse Educators in the Tertiary Sector (NETS) (2012). Social media and the nursing profession: a guide to online professionalism for nurses and nursing students, 1-19.
- The Privacy Act (1993)
- Health Information Privacy Code (1994)
- Harmful Digital Communications Act (2015)
- Nursing Council of New Zealand (2012) Code of Conduct for Nurses

Internal

- E-mail and Internet Standard - Appendix 3 of the ICT governance policy
- Human Relations Guidelines - section 7, Employment Relationship
- Bylaws for Credentialed Specialists
- Privacy and release of information Policy
- Incident Policy
- Clinical Records Management Policy
- ICT security policy
- Delegations of Authority Policy

Process - Staff use of Social Media

- Mercy Hospital has a Privacy Officer (Director of Clinical Services) who promotes a culture of privacy and continually seeks privacy enhancing responses to situations of risk.

Guidelines for staff

- The Health Information Privacy Code (1994) applies to health agencies and expressly states that health information must only be used for the purpose for which it was obtained / shared with people who have need of it. As such, staff utilising any public platform must make a professional judgement regarding the potential risk to their own, their colleagues or their patient's privacy and their professional accountability.
- Social media is not blocked at Mercy Hospital, it is expected that this will not be accessed during working hours, for purposes other than those directly related to Mercy Hospital business.
- Mercy Hospital reserves the right to audit (footprint) and govern access to external sites including social media.
- Actions or behaviours online that bring Mercy Hospital into disrepute can lead to a disciplinary process.
- Crossing professional / personal boundaries may bring the reputation of Mercy Hospital, your profession or your own personal integrity into disrepute. Examples of breaches of this would be a tweet, detailing a bad day at work or naming colleagues. Staff must not criticise the activity of Mercy Hospital in any public forum or to any third party - this will be viewed as defamation and will be taken very seriously. Dissatisfaction with any working conditions should be directed appropriately through your Line Manager or Human Resources personnel.

Posting online or on social media

- Staff must remember that where they are identified as Mercy Hospital employees, their image is aligned to that of Mercy Hospital. Staff should critically reflect upon how any social media activity reflects upon the organisation or themselves as employees of Mercy Hospital.
- Any online activity is in the public domain, and as such is accessible to anyone. You must be respectful of Mercy Hospital and other employees
- Maintaining professional boundaries in the use of social media means keeping your Personal and Professional lives separate as far as possible.

- It is advisable to review your privacy settings and passwords regularly, to minimise access to your information.

Mercy Hospital Social Media Profiles

- Mercy Hospital has active social media profiles on relevant public platforms. All Mercy Hospital social media profiles have a designated owner. To ensure consistency in branding and messaging only designated staff authorised to manage social media accounts may post on behalf of Mercy Hospital. The release of such content will be done in accordance with the delegations of authority policy.
- All posts to Mercy Hospital social media platforms will reflect Mercy Hospital's values and shared purpose.
- All posts to Mercy Hospital social media platform will utilise approved brand assets (i.e. Logos, Fonts, Colour Schemes etc.).
- Staff are encouraged to 'like' and share Mercy Hospital posts using their own personal profiles. In doing so staff must ensure any comments added reflect the values of Mercy Hospital.
- Staff that see comments or posts that negatively reflect Mercy Hospital or are inaccurate, should not engage in conversation online, and instead forward their concerns to the Chief Executive Officer or Exec on call for response
- Any patient feedback provided via social media channels (i.e. Facebook) is captured by the Quality Coordinator, responded to appropriately and added to the Quality 'compliments and concerns' spreadsheet
- Mercy Hospital may take photos or write up events that happened at Mercy Hospital for promotion of the hospital, or recruitment purposes. Staff not wishing to have their images shared should avoid being photographed

Mercy Hospital will not identify staff by name online or in social media platforms without the express permission of the staff member.

Patient Privacy

- Befriending patients or their relatives via social media is never advisable as it may breach patient confidentiality and privacy.
- Mercy Hospital has a statement on the use of patient images or photos for medical purposes (see Clinical Records Management Policy). Do not take photos or videos of patients using personal devices.
- Never use public social media platforms to transmit patient related images or information that may violate patient rights to confidentiality and privacy. This includes ANY patient name or identifier.