Networking Sites and PHI

To ensure patient privacy, students should not communicate PHI/patient information with individuals outside of the Duke University Health System (DUHS) setting including on social networking sites.

Social networking sites, such as Facebook, MySpace, blogs, Twitter, and You Tube, can be helpful and beneficial for communicating and educating. However, they can create privacy concerns if patient information is shared inadvertently or without the appropriate authorization.

**To ensure patient’s confidentiality/privacy, on personal networking sites/pages** (Facebook, MySpace, Twitter, blogs, LinkedIn, YouTube postings, Instant Messaging, etc.), **students cannot:**

- Post or discuss DUHS patients or any detail of their training activity at DUHS such as:
  - Discuss their day at work that includes events that happen on the unit or department, e.g., had a bad day because one of my patients died
  - Participate in any online conversation with patients or regarding patients
- Post or discuss or any Protected Health Information known as PHI:
  - PHI includes: identifying descriptors of patients (such as their name, medical record number, room number, sex, age, address or location, etc.), information about their treatment or condition, pictures of patients, videos of patients, and diagnostic images of patients
- Communicate with specific patients about their condition/treatment even if the patient initiates communication on-line
- Communicate with the instructor, other students, friends, family, etc. about your training at DUHS and DUHS patients

As a reminder even when not on-line, students cannot discuss patients or patient information with family, friends, or others not involved in the patient’s care.

If students have questions or concerns regarding privacy and social networking sites, they should contact their preceptor/instructor or the DUHS Compliance Office at 668-2573, or they may the contact the Duke Medicine Integrity Line at **1-800-826-8109** for anonymous and confidential reporting.