

Federation of
STATE 
MEDICAL
BOARDS



Online Professionalism: Challenges and Opportunities

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If Facebook and Twitter were countries

	■ China	1.3 billion
	■ India	1.2 billion
	■ US	314 million
	■ Indonesia	237 million
	■ Brazil	193 million
	■ United Kingdom	62 million
	■ South Africa	50 million
	■ South Korea	50 million
	■ Canada	34 million

If Facebook and Twitter were countries

	■ China	1.3 billion
	■ India	1.2 billion
	■ Facebook	900 million
	■ Twitter	500 million
	■ US	314 million
	■ Indonesia	237 million
	■ Brazil	193 million
	■ United Kingdom	62 million
	■ South Africa	50 million
	■ South Korea	50 million
	■ Canada	34 million

Online Professionalism

- All interactions between professionals and the Internet
- Social media act as a mirror for professional values and reflects the best and worst aspects of individuals and their organizations
- A digital footprint



Challenges

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Health / Health care

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Facebook misconduct: Med students cross line

Some broke confidentiality, tried to 'friend' patient online, study shows

Associated Press updated 4:23 p.m. ET, Tues, Sept. 22, 2009

CHICAGO (AP) — A new survey of medical students found that some broke confidentiality by posting photos of patients online and sending friend requests to patients.

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For Medical Secrets, Try Facebook

Posting Patient Info Online Could Be Violation of Patient Confidentiality Laws

By EWEN CALLAWAY Sept. 23, 2009

Share this story with friends: Digg submit, Facebook, Twitter, Yahoo!, Reddit, More

Having trouble remembering your medical history? Try Facebook.

facebook Facebook helps you connect and share with the people in your life. Sign Up It's free and everyone can join.

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HEALTH MAIN LIVING WELL DIET & FITNESS

Medical students reckless on Internet, sometimes at patients' expense

updated 5:15 p.m. EDT, Tue September 22, 2009

By Denise Mann

Health

In 2007, a resident surgeon snapped a picture of a patient's tattoo -- the words shared it with colleagues, making international news when the story was leaked. The resident didn't post the picture on the Internet.

A new survey suggests that medical students using blogging and sites like YouTube, such as a third of medical students post inappropriate or on the Web, according to September 23/30 issue of [American Medical Association](#).

Most of the time, the information is the student's own behavior, drug-related, or sexual comments, as well as discriminatory language.

But six schools, or 13 percent, in the past year that in patient privacy. For ex

In the age of Facebook and YouTube, medical students might post content that violates patient privacy.

Some 13 per cent of US medical students have reported that their student colleagues leaked confidential information about patients via blogs or social networking websites.

The students didn't name names.

Knowledge Gaps

- Are licensing authorities concerned about online professionalism?
- Are state medical boards experiencing complaints?
- Are disciplinary actions occurring as a result?



Explosive Problem for the University of Louisville – Nursing Student Expelled for MySpace Blog

March 12th, 2009 · 118 Comments

Doctor busted for patient info spill on Facebook

Though probably inadvertent, physician's post led to identification of patient

Nurses Fired Over Cell Phone Photos Of Patient

Case Referred To FBI For Possible HIPAA Violations

POSTED: 5:22 pm CST February 25, 2009

Stony Brook medical student's photo with cadaver is off Facebook

January 29, 2010 By CHAU LAM chau.lam@newsday.com

Hospital employees post patients' pictures on Web site

ALBUQUERQUE, New Mexico — Two employees of a U.S. hospital have been fired for using cellphone cameras to take photographs of patients who were receiving treatment and then posting the images to a social networking Web site.

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Methodology and Response

- Self-administered online survey assessing:
- 71% of boards responded
- Respondents
 - ✓ 67% Executive Directors
 - ✓ 8% Licensing
 - ✓ 17% Investigations
 - ✓ 8% Other

92% reported online professionalism violations

Inappropriate contact
with patients (69%)

Inappropriate
prescribing (63%)

Misrepresentation of
credentials or clinical
outcomes (60%)

92% reported online professionalism violations

71% held formal
disciplinary proceedings

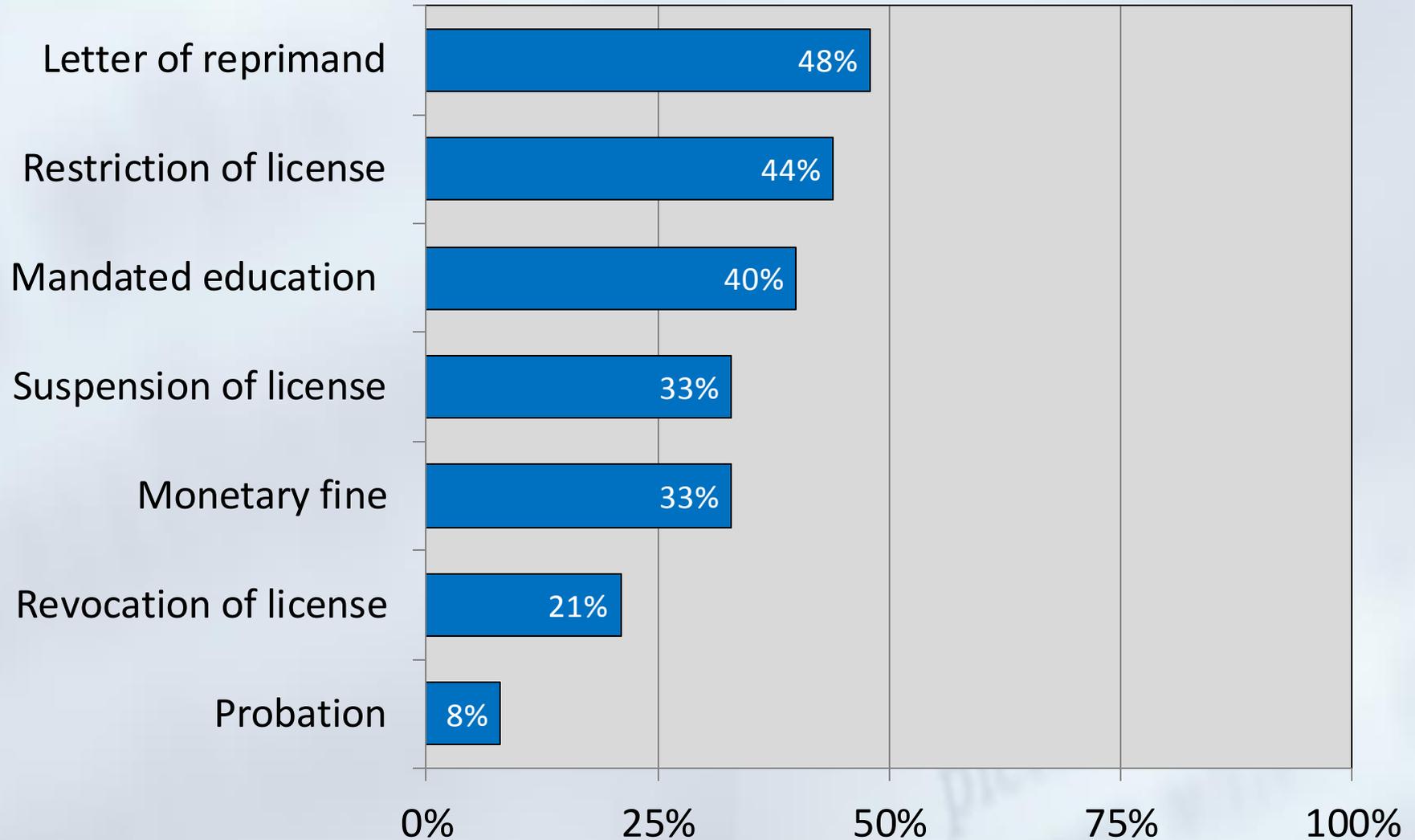
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graph TD; A[71% held formal disciplinary proceedings] --> B[License limitation (44%)]; A --> C[License suspension (29%)]; A --> D[License revocation (21%)];
```

License limitation
(44%)

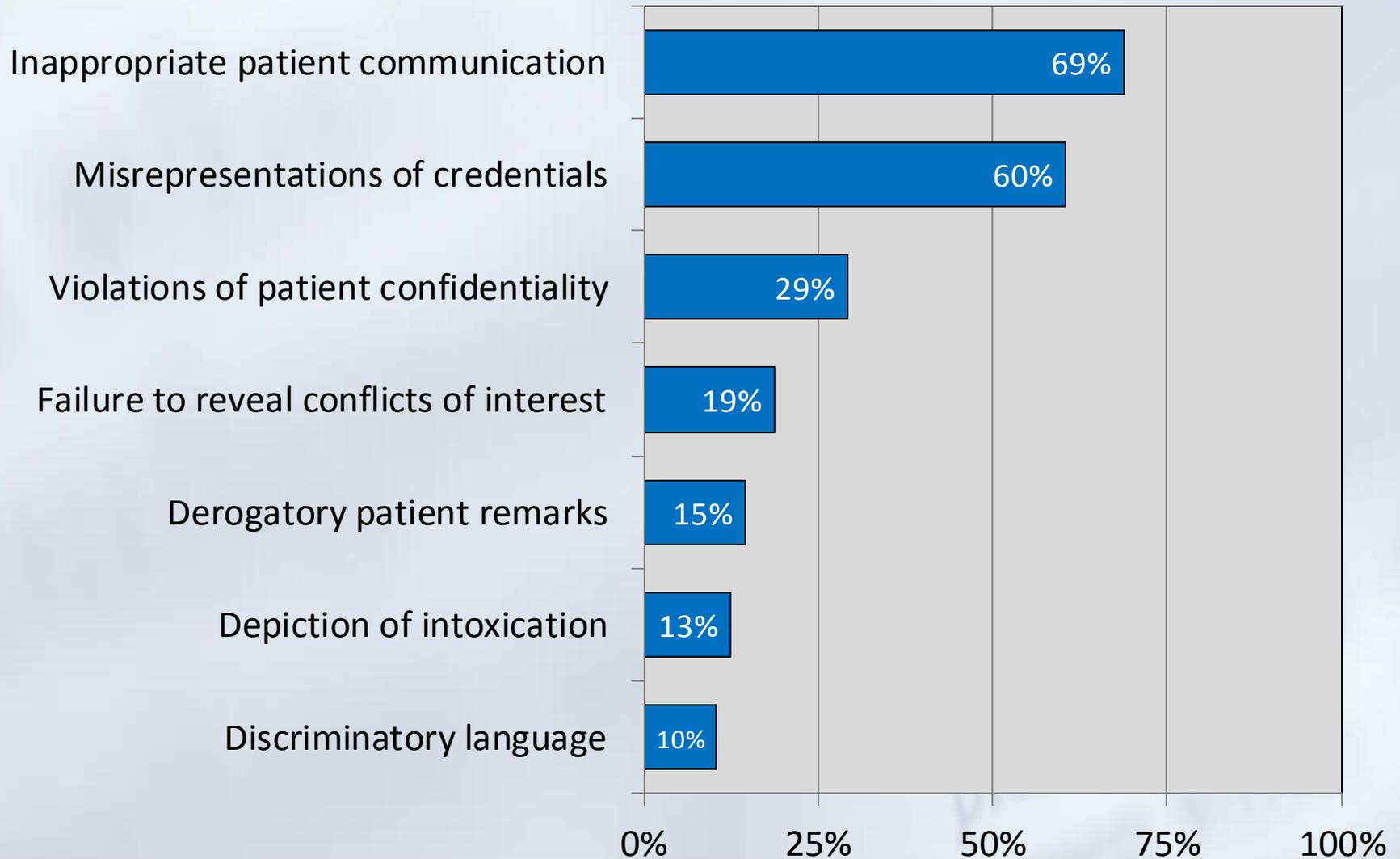
License revocation
(21%)

License suspension
(29%)

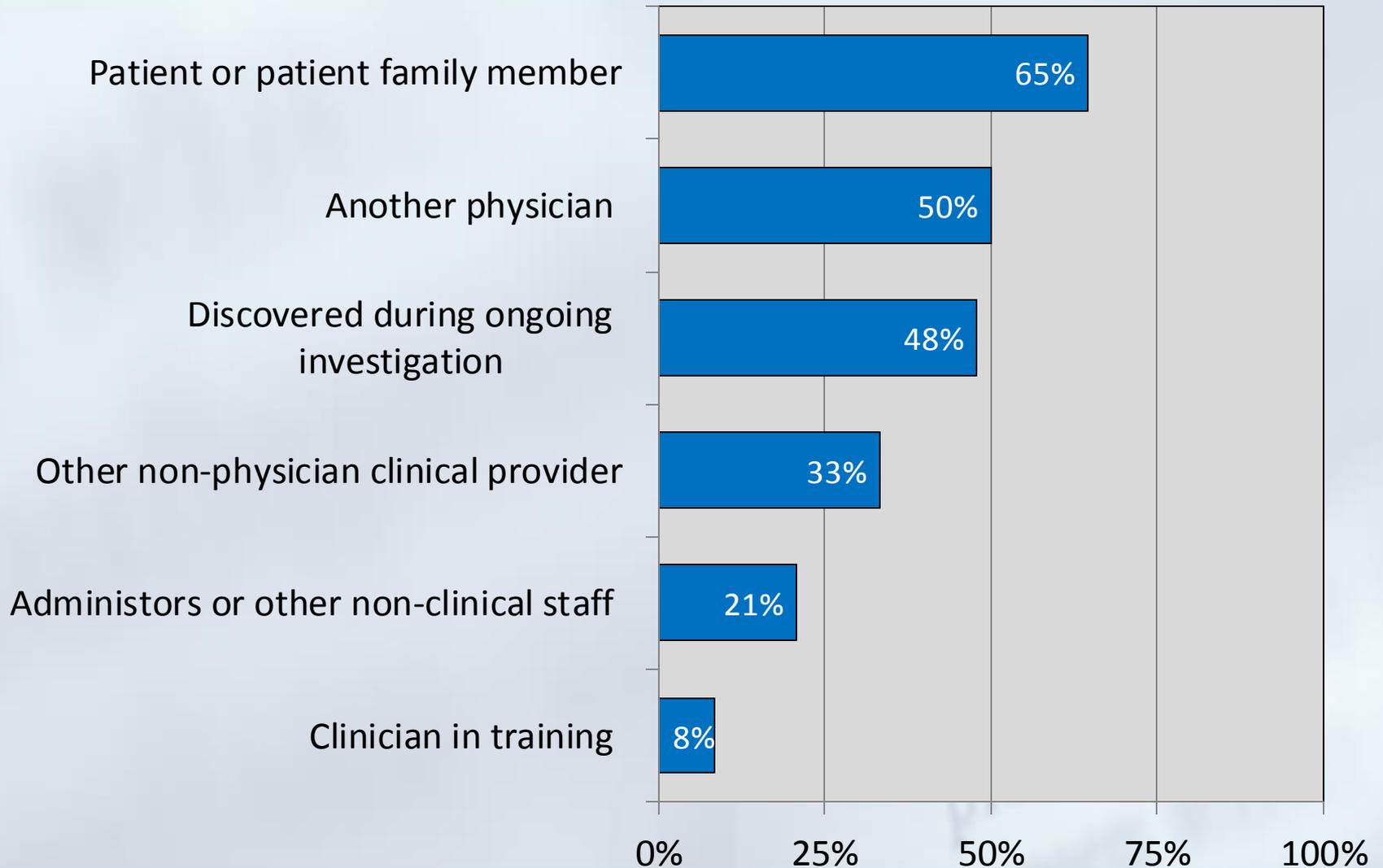
Outcomes of Disciplinary Proceedings



Types of Violations



How were complaints initiated?



Vignettes

- 1) Patient confidentiality
- 2) Misinformation on practice website
- 3) Inappropriate contact with patients
- 4) Discriminatory or derogatory speech
- 5) Depicted use of alcohol

Example 1

- A concerned patient reports that her surgeon posted pictures of herself drinking at a hospital Holiday party on Facebook.



Example 2

- A concerned patient reports her physician frequently describes “partying” on his Facebook page which is accompanied by images of himself such as the one below:



ACP-FSMB Position Paper

Online Medical Professionalism: Patient and Public Relationships

- Written and Approved by
 - ACP's Ethics, Professionalism and Human Rights Committee
 - ACP's Council of Associates
 - FSMB's Committee on Ethics and Professionalism
- Approved, FSMB Board of Directors, October 21, 2012
- Approved, ACP Board of Regents, November 17, 2012
- Published, *Annals of Internal Medicine* on April 11, 2013

ACP-FSMB Position Paper

Online Medical Professionalism: Patient and Public Relationships

- Online communication has **dramatically increased** but there is **little guidance** on best practices for physicians
- Physicians should consider how to best **protect patient interests and apply principles of professionalism** to new settings
- Striking a balance between **harnessing opportunities while being aware of challenges** in the use of technology is critical
- “Connectivity need not come at the expense of professionalism.” (Parikh et al, *Academic Medicine*, 2010)

ACP-FSMB Position Paper, Position #1

Online Medical Professionalism: Patient and Public Relationships

- “Use of online media can bring **significant educational benefits** to patients and physicians but may also pose **ethical challenges**
- Maintaining **trust** in the profession and in patient-physician relationships requires that physicians consistently apply ethical principles for preserving the patient-physician relationship, confidentiality, privacy and respect for persons to online settings and communications”

ACP-FSMB Position Paper, Position #2

Online Medical Professionalism: Patient and Public Relationships

- “The boundaries between professional and social spheres can **blur** online.
- Physicians should keep the two spheres **separate** and comport themselves professionally in both.”

ACP-FSMB Position Paper, Position #3

Online Medical Professionalism: Patient and Public Relationships

- “E-mail or other electronic communications should only be used by physicians **within an established patient-physician relationship and with patient consent.**
- **Documentation** about patient care communications should be included in the patient’s medical record.”

ACP-FSMB Position Paper, Position #4

Online Medical Professionalism: Patient and Public Relationships

- “Physicians should consider periodically **“self-auditing”** to assess the accuracy of information available about them on physician ranking websites and other sources online.”

ACP-FSMB Position Paper, Position #5

Online Medical Professionalism: Patient and Public Relationships

- “The reach of the Internet and online communications is **far** and often **permanent**.
- Physicians, trainees and medical students should be aware of **future implications** for their professional lives of online postings and interactions.”

Moving Forward

- Professionalism is a core competency for physicians
- Incumbent upon regulators and physicians to identify and address emerging trends in online practices
- Create standards with broad consensus about what is or is not appropriate online behavior for physicians
 - FSMB's Model Policy Guidelines for the Appropriate Use of Social Media in Medical Practice
- A need for continuing education about the potential consequences of unprofessional actions online

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