

## **Introduction**

Mobile devices and the software that accompanies them provide nursing students with access to information that will enhance their ability to provide safe, quality care.

Therefore, starting in May 2012, The University of Akron College of Nursing will require all basic and accelerated BSN students to use a mobile device equipped with a nursing reference software package.

## **Guidelines**

The American Nurses Association (ANA) and the National Council of State Boards of Nursing (NCSBN) have established guidelines that relate to the use of mobile devices.

“Nurses” should be understood to include licensed practicing nurses as well as nursing students, who are being prepared by the College to become practicing nurses and as such will be held to these standards of practice.

### *ANA: 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.

### *NCSBN: A Nurse’s Guide to the Use of Social Media*

1. First and foremost, nurses must recognize that they have an ethical and legal obligation to maintain patient privacy and confidentiality at all times.
2. Nurses are strictly prohibited from transmitting by way of any electronic media any patient-related image. In addition, nurses are restricted from transmitting any information that may be reasonably anticipated to violate patient rights to confidentiality or privacy, or otherwise degrade or embarrass the patient.
3. Do not share, post or otherwise disseminate any information, including images, about a patient or information gained in the nurse-patient relationship with anyone unless there is a patient care related need to disclose the information or other legal obligation to do so.
4. Do not identify patients by name or post or publish information that may lead to the identification of a patient. Limiting access to postings through privacy settings is not sufficient to ensure privacy.
5. Do not refer to patients in a disparaging manner, even if the patient is not identified.

6. Do not take photos or videos of patients on personal devices, including cell phones. Follow employer policies for taking photographs or video of patients for treatment or other legitimate purposes using employer-provided devices.
7. Maintain professional boundaries in the use of electronic media. Like in-person relationships, the nurse has the obligation to establish, communicate and enforce professional boundaries with patients in the online environment. Use caution when having online social contact with patients or former patients. Online contact with patients or former patients blurs the distinction between a professional and personal relationship. The fact that a patient may initiate contact with the nurse does not permit the nurse to engage in a personal relationship with the patient.
8. Consult employer policies or an appropriate leader within the organization for guidance regarding work related postings.
9. Promptly report any identified breach of confidentiality or privacy.
10. Be aware of and comply with employer policies regarding use of employer-owned computers, cameras and other electronic devices and use of personal devices in the work place.
11. Do not make disparaging remarks about employers or co-workers. Do not make threatening, harassing, profane, obscene, sexually explicit, racially derogatory, homophobic or other offensive comments.
12. Do not post content or otherwise speak on behalf of the employer unless authorized to do so and follow all applicable policies of the employer.

### **Policies**

Based on the guidelines outlined above, the following policies shall apply to the use of mobile devices by students in the clinical setting.

1. Use of the device must be limited to only those features required to care for patients.
  - a. Do not answer or make personal phone calls while caring for patients.
    - i. Personal phone calls are permitted during break periods in which students are not actively caring for patients.
  - b. Do not send personal text messages while caring for patients.
    - i. Personal text messages are permitted during break periods in which students are not actively caring for patients.
  - c. Do not take photographs of patients.
  - d. Do not access the Internet for anything other than to retrieve information necessary to provide care.

### **Consequences**

Students should be aware that inappropriate use of mobile devices may constitute a violation of federal or state laws.

Any of the following consequences may be applied depending on the severity of the situation.

- Verbal or written warning with documentation placed in the student's file for review by the Admissions and Progressions Committee and "FYI" notification to Student Judicial Affairs as appropriate.
- Referral to Student Judicial Affairs as appropriate.
- Dismissal from the clinical and referral to the director, coordinator, and course faculty.
- Evaluation by the Admissions and Progressions Committee for dismissal from the program.
- If student is licensed, report to the State Board of Nursing as appropriate and according to law and rule.

### **References**

American Nurses Association. (2011). Navigating the world of social media. Retrieved October 27, 2011, from <http://www.nursingworld.org/FunctionalMenuCategories/AboutANA/Social-Media/Social-Networking-Principles-Toolkit/Navigating-the-World-of-Social-Media.aspx>

National Council of State Boards of Nursing. (2011). White paper: A nurse's guide to the use of social media. Retrieved October 27, 2011, from [https://www.ncsbn.org/Social\\_Media.pdf](https://www.ncsbn.org/Social_Media.pdf)