

Social Media Policy



Effective Date: 31/01/2024

Reviewed on: 31/01/2025

Next Review Date: 31/01/2026

1. Purpose

This Social Media Policy outlines the guidelines and expectations for all staff at Somerville Village Clinic regarding the use of social media, both professionally and personally. The goal is to protect patient privacy, uphold the clinic's reputation, ensure compliance with legal and ethical standards, and promote responsible use of social media platforms.

2. Scope

This policy applies to all employees, contractors, and any individuals who represent Somerville Village Clinic on social media platforms, whether on professional accounts or personal accounts. It covers both internal and external communication, including Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, Twitter, and any other social media platform.

3. Definitions

- **Social Media:** Any platform or website that allows users to create and share content or participate in social networking. Examples include Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, LinkedIn, TikTok, YouTube, blogs, and online forums.
- **Clinic Social Media Accounts:** Official accounts maintained by Somerville Village Clinic for communication and marketing purposes.

4. General Guidelines

- **Professionalism:** All staff should maintain professionalism on social media, ensuring that personal posts do not reflect poorly on the clinic.
- **Confidentiality:** No patient-related information, including names, images, health details, or any other identifying data, should be shared on social media, whether directly or indirectly.
- **Compliance:** All posts must comply with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) guidelines, the Privacy Act 1988, and relevant healthcare advertising standards.
- **Respect:** Employees must engage with others in a respectful, inclusive, and non-discriminatory manner.

5. Official Clinic Social Media Accounts

- Only authorised personnel may post on official clinic social media accounts.
- Posts must be accurate, evidence-based, and in line with the clinic's values and healthcare standards.
- Content shared should promote the clinic's services in a clear, ethical, and non-misleading manner.
- Ensure that all promotional material, such as advertisements for services, complies with AHPRA's advertising guidelines.
- All clinic-related content should be reviewed and approved by the designated social media manager or clinic leadership before posting.

6. Personal Social Media Accounts

- Employees are free to use social media for personal purposes but should be mindful that what they post may reflect on the clinic.
- **Separation of Personal and Professional:** Employees should make it clear that their personal views and opinions are their own and not those of the clinic. It is advisable to keep personal accounts separate from professional roles (e.g., separate LinkedIn profiles).
- **No Patient Information:** Employees must not share any patient information, including treatment details, medical history, or personal health data, on personal social media accounts, even in an anonymised or indirect manner.
- **Professional Reputation:** Employees should avoid posting content that could damage the clinic's reputation. This includes disparaging comments about colleagues, the clinic, patients, or other healthcare professionals.

7. Patient Confidentiality and Privacy

- **No Patient Identifiable Information:** Under no circumstances should patient information, photos, or videos be shared on social media without the patient's written consent.
- **Consent for Testimonials:** Any testimonials or success stories shared on social media must be approved by the patient, and written consent must be obtained.
- **No Discussions of Patient Care:** Medical discussions or advice should never take place on social media platforms. Patients should be encouraged to contact the clinic directly for any medical concerns or queries.

8. Engagement with Patients on Social Media

- Do not offer medical advice or make diagnoses through social media.

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- Patient interactions should be kept professional and respectful. Any sensitive or personal matters should be directed to the clinic's secure communication channels (phone, email, etc.).
- If a patient posts a complaint or negative comment, respond promptly and professionally. Address the issue privately and offer to discuss further through the clinic's official channels.

9. Handling Negative Feedback

- **Complaint Management:** If a complaint is posted on a clinic social media account, respond courteously and suggest moving the conversation to a private setting (email or phone) for resolution.
- **Defamation and Disputes:** Any defamatory or inappropriate content regarding the clinic or its staff should be reported to the clinic management. Legal action may be considered if the defamation continues or escalates.

10. Security and Privacy Protection

- **Security of Accounts:** Clinic social media accounts should have strong passwords and use two-factor authentication where possible. Only authorised personnel should have access to these accounts.
- **Protection of Data:** Employees should never share passwords or sensitive information via social media.

11. Prohibited Activities

The following activities are prohibited on both personal and professional social media accounts:

- Sharing patient personal data, medical records, or any other confidential information.
- Posting any offensive, discriminatory, or inappropriate content.
- Engaging in personal arguments or debates regarding work-related issues on public social media platforms.
- Promoting personal businesses or services unrelated to the clinic's practice on clinic social media accounts.

12. Social Media Advertising and Promotions

- **Compliance with AHPRA:** All advertising, including promotions and offers, must comply with AHPRA guidelines, which include prohibitions on misleading information, undue guarantees, or unrealistic promises.

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- **No Testimonials:** Testimonials, reviews, or endorsements that imply a guaranteed result are not allowed.
- **Transparent Messaging:** All paid advertisements or promotions must be clearly identifiable as such and contain accurate information.

13. Monitoring and Enforcement

- The clinic reserves the right to monitor social media activity related to the clinic or its staff to ensure compliance with this policy.
- Violation of this policy may result in disciplinary action, including verbal or written warnings, suspension, or termination of employment.

14. Policy Review

This Social Media Policy will be reviewed annually to ensure it remains relevant and compliant with evolving legal, ethical, and regulatory standards. Staff will be notified of any updates or changes to the policy.