Background

This poster provides a review of interim results from a qualitative study on first year medical students’ attitudes and perceptions of their definition of medical professionalism in social media.

Included in the study is an evaluation of changes in perspective since becoming a medical student and after participating in an E-Professionalism and Social Media instructional session.

Methods

- E-Professionalism and Social Media session held with first year medical students (January 2012)
- Session:
  - Students responded to audience response system questions reflecting on their social media usage and real-life examples of social media content (e.g. Facebook, blogs, Twitter) posted by health care professionals and students
  - Discussion about appropriate and inappropriate uses
  - Panel discussion with GW physicians who use social media
- Post-session reflection exercise
  - Students responded to specific prompts requesting them to reflect on their personal social media experiences, their interpretation of online medical professionalism and create a draft of social media guidelines.
- Study
  - 64 students consented to participate
  - Reflections were de-identified, and independently coded by two investigators to eliciting themes.
  - All four investigators met to reconcile codes and ensure inter-rater reliability.

Results

Multiple themes have emerged, summarized here by question.

Who are you representing online?

- Golf, family, peers
- Medical profession
- University/employer

What changes have you made to your social media presence since entering medical school?

- Made more private
- Changed content/ photos
- Increased awareness
- No change

After participating in this session, are you considering changing anything in your social media presence?

- No changes planned/ already professional
- Awareness of positive impact
- Take down presence

Conclusion

Medical students are consumers and producers of social media. Including online professionalism in the curriculum in this way with a focus on implication and best practices can help them develop an awareness of their professional presence in this electronic era.

This study hopes to inform the development of social media policies at medical schools. Additional data is being analyzed for a subsequent cohort of medical students.

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