



Patient Identification, Confidentiality and Consent: Further Guidance

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Summary

The Society and College of Radiographers (SCoR) is issuing this additional advice following on from publicity surrounding a recent Health Professions Council (HPC) case where a paramedic was sanctioned for posting a radiographic image on a social networking site.

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Issues of confidentiality and consent are addressed in two key SCoR guidance and advice documents:

- Code of Conduct and Ethics (2008)
- Consent to Imaging and Radiotherapy Treatment Examinations (2007)

Both of these documents are accessible from the online document library on the website www.sor.org (click on publications). Members are advised to re-read these documents on a regular basis to ensure that they are familiar with the advice and are able to practice within the guidelines as set by the professional body.

The proliferation of social networking sites and the trend for informal and frequent communication raises potential dangers for breaches of patient confidentiality and consent.

The Code of Conduct and Ethics says:

You must not share the medical or personal details of a patient/client with anyone except those healthcare professionals who are integral to the well being of the patient. Consent of the patient should be gained before sharing information with relatives, carers or whoever may accompany the patient.

You must neither misuse electronic mail nor discuss patients or their illnesses in a public place. Local policies and procedures should be followed with regard to the leaving of messages on telephone answering systems.

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Service user confidence is imperative and you need to follow the SCoR guidelines in *Consent to imaging and radiotherapy treatment examinations: an ethical perspective and good practice guide for the radiography workforce* and the HPC guidelines in **Confidentiality: guidance for registrants**.

All members of the imaging and radiotherapy workforces must protect the confidentiality of the patient and never reveal or share any information inappropriately. Images are not to be used for entertainment purposes and extreme care must be taken in posting any work related comments on any social networking site. The Code of Conduct and Ethics makes it clear that there is an expectation on all members of the imaging and radiotherapy workforces that they would at all times conduct themselves in such a way that they maintain the widest public trust and confidence in the profession.

Any questions about this advice should be directed to Christina Freeman, Professional Officer on christinaf@sor.org or telephone 020 7740 7245

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