

Social Media Policy

College-Wide Social Media Policy

Introduction

The American College of Cardiology and American College of Cardiology Foundation (collectively, the “College”) are committed to supporting honest, transparent and knowledgeable dialogue on the Internet through social media. The College's social media platforms aim to foster meaningful connections, engage diverse audiences, and support ACC’s mission to transform cardiovascular care and improve heart health for all.

Online Social Media Principles

The College maintains official Facebook, X LinkedIn, Instagram, BlueSky, YouTube, and WeChat accounts. All official social media accounts are managed by the Social Media Team, led by Social Media Team Lead and Social Media Managers (ACC and JACC). "The Social Media Team Lead and Managers oversee the integrity and security of all accounts, ensuring proper access control and accountability.". The Social Media Team Lead grants access to other members of staff or College contractors or summer College workers to administer the platforms and to post content as approved by the Chief Communications Officer.

Staff and member volunteers who are granted access to post or create content in an official capacity must have undergone training in appropriate conduct specific to each platform, and these staff and volunteers may lose their ability to post or create content if they are found to have violated this Social Media Policy. All staff who post to official social media accounts must follow established procedures for review. Member volunteers can provide content for accounts, but are not allowed access to the College’s social media accounts and passwords.

Establishing separate programmatic or publishing accounts on any social network beyond the official ACC and JACC Journals accounts already created is prohibited. All social media accounts must be authorized by the Chief Communications Officer (CCO) and managed by the Social Media Team Lead or Manager, with clear role definitions for content contributors and moderators. Social media accounts representing the College cannot be created by staff not expressly authorized in this Policy or by member volunteers.

Social media accounts are only useful if the content is current, relevant and fresh. If activity in an established account lapses for more than three (3) months, the account must be removed or the administrative rights turned over to another moderator, who shall be designated or approved by the Communications team. New accounts will be evaluated at

six months to assess viability based on available engagement metrics, including interaction rates and follower growth. In addition, all accounts must have more than one moderator in the event crisis control and immediate action is necessary, and one moderator cannot be reached.

User-generated content, including testimonials, stories, and discussions, may be shared with permission. Credit should always be given to the original creator, and permission should be sought before sharing.

What Should the College Say Online?

The goal for the College's social media postings is to meld its followers' interests with its Mission. Topics covered may include, but are not limited to:

- ACC live programs and other cardiovascular events or meetings
- New clinical documents and tools
- ACC project or organizational updates
- Legislative or health policy news/updates
- Latest cardiovascular research and news
- JACC Journals Content

Content should encourage active participation and foster dialogue among stakeholders, responding to comments and questions in a timely and respectful manner. The College and College staff will not make disparaging remarks about anyone personally or engage in disagreements online. The College will not post any information that constitutes the provision of professional, including specialized medical or legal, advice.

Management of Social Networking Groups

To reach the College's various audiences, several social networking platforms and tools need to be used to meet the unique needs of each group. It is essential to ensure consistency of brand and message and align content appropriately.

All individuals managing social media accounts should participate in regular, ongoing social media training to stay updated on platform changes, digital trends, and ethical engagement practices. The Communications team will be responsible for centralizing social media management. Under no circumstances should an ACC member be granted administrative rights to the College's social media accounts.

Assuming the role of moderator or administrator of a social media account constitutes a loss of privacy. The ramifications of this fact should be considered before establishing or agreeing to moderate an account. The Communications team must maintain a list of moderators for each sponsored social media account.

Moderators shall maintain unique user name and passwords for the account consistent with the College's Corporate Security Policy.

Monitoring Policy

College social media accounts shall be monitored regularly and prompt corrective action shall be taken when an issue arises that places, or has potential to place, the College in a negative light or that presents legal risk to the College. The College shall review site activity and content daily for exploitation or misuse.

College staff members are encouraged to monitor social media on behalf of the College as well. Social media can be used in as many productive ways as it can be misused. As a general guideline, if you have any question as to whether something should be removed, please contact the Social Media Manager or Chief Communications Officer.

The College will also monitor replies and comments and will check all social media accounts daily.

Responding to Negative Comments

A healthy dialogue with constructive criticism can be useful, but the College will refrain from engaging in dialogue that could disparage colleagues, members, competitors, or critics.

If a user leaves a negative comment, the College will most likely not delete the comment for transparency reasons. However, the College will correct misinformation, but not engage in heated arguments. Often, the community will correct itself and step in to correct inaccuracies or defend the organization. If this happens and is sufficient to resolve the issue, there may be no need for an additional official response. The College will delete irrelevant, vulgar, explicit or potentially defamatory posts, and reserves the right to delete such posts in its sole discretion.

Responding to Positive and Neutral Comments

The College will maintain a friendly and professional tone when posting updates and having conversations with supporters or members.

When posting or replying to a message, the College will take the time to review the content to ensure it cannot be interpreted in any negative light. The College will make every effort to reply to comments in a timely manner if a response is needed.

General Guidelines and Expectations for College Employees and Member Volunteers

- **Be professional and respectful.** As representatives of the College, we should represent our profession well. Adhere to rules of ethical and professional conduct at all times. The College expects staff and member volunteers to act responsibly when engaging in online activities that concern College business interests and operations. Once an individual has been identified as affiliated with the College (as an FACC, College member, College employee, or College consultant or contractor) on social networks, including in profiles, any activities may be connected to College members, clients and partners globally. It also is important to be mindful of how you contribute ideas and post content online, and that you adhere to the Standards of Conduct and Acceptable Use policies in any situation where the College is tied to your content. While it is easy to post information online, it can be difficult, if not impossible, to remove that information. Once something is posted, blogged or tweeted, it's fair game.
- **Be responsible.** Carefully consider content and exercise good judgment as anything you post can have immediate and/or long-term consequences and carry the potential for significant public impact and viral spread of content. Therefore, all statements must be true and not misleading. Make sure that you differentiate opinions from facts.
- **Be transparent/use disclaimers.** Disclose yourself and provide an appropriate disclaimer that distinguishes your views from those of the College. Without specific approval from appropriate College leadership, you may not present yourself as an official representative or spokesperson for the College.
- **Follow copyright laws.** Comply with copyright laws. Make sure you have the right to use material before publishing.
- **Correct your mistakes.** You should promptly report significant errors in your use of Social Media for College Communications. If you have made a minor error when using Social Media for the College, such as posting an inaccurate link or incorrect date, the error should be corrected promptly. If you have included significant inappropriate, untrue, or damaging content on Social Media for the College about yourself or other individuals or entities, inadvertently or otherwise, it should be reported promptly to the Social Media Manager or Chief Communications Officer. These situations, if they arise, can be more complex to handle than they may appear, so you should not attempt to address this on your own.

- **Protect confidential, financial and proprietary information.** Be wary of how you post content to internal and external social media. Do not disclose corporate sensitive information including any confidential, financial, or proprietary information about the College, any individual or other organization, on any form of social networks or communications. If you have questions about what qualifies as corporate sensitive information, see the College's Data Classification Policy or contact the College's Chief Communications Officer.
- **Protect client/patient information.** Do not discuss confidential information and follow standards of patient privacy and confidentiality and regulations outlined in Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act (HIPAA) and the Family Educational Rights and Privacy Act (FERPA, 20 U.S.C. § 1232g). Remember you could personally face a HIPAA violation if there are enough details in the post for patients to recognize themselves.
- **Avoid politics.** Political endorsements or advocacy positions that are not officially sanctioned by the College should be avoided on College social media sites.
- **Comply with all legal restrictions and obligations.** Remember use of social networking sites or weblogs can carry legal and professional ramifications. Comments made in an unprofessional manner can be used in legal, professional, or other disciplinary proceedings (i.e., hearings before a State Medical Licensing Board).
- **Be aware of risks to privacy and security.** Read the site's Terms of Use and Privacy Policy. Be cognizant of continuous changes in these sites and closely monitor the privacy settings of the social network accounts to optimize your privacy and security.

Social Media Disclaimer

The following social media disclaimer must be included on all external social media accounts and social networking pages:

The American College of Cardiology and the American College of Cardiology Foundation (collectively, the "College") welcome discussions related to all aspects of cardiology on our social media sites. The College does not allow the posting of any sensitive information relating to the practice of medicine or any information that directly or indirectly could identify a patient or consumer of health care, as it is in violation of our policy. The College reserves the right to remove any posts from its platforms that are in violation of our policies and that are deemed offensive, misleading or harmful. Promotion of drugs, devices and other medical technologies will not be tolerated, and any comments, discussions or links involving promotional material will be removed. Repeated attempts to post promotional

content will result in the individual being blocked and/or reported. Statements or opinions expressed on the page reflect the views of the contributor, and do not reflect the official views of the College, unless otherwise noted. The College cannot respond to every comment. Likes and follows on social media channels are not endorsements. The College assumes no liability for sensitive information posted by users.

This policy is regularly reviewed and updated to ensure alignment with evolving social media practices, platform changes, and emerging communication technologies.

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