Ethics Unwrapped:

Case Study in Social Media Use

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Disclosure

- No conflicts to disclose

Session Objectives

- Review the principles and guidelines of the AAPM code of ethics contained in Task Group 109

- Review AAPM policies and guidance on social media use

- Present an ethics case study on social media use

- Facilitate a discussion related to the case study

AAPM Code of Ethics (TG-109)

- AAPM Code of ethics applies to all members of the American Association of Physicists in Medicine

- Includes guidelines that serve as a resource for members for multiple scenarios

AAPM Code of Ethics Structure

- How to Use This Document
  - Describes the sections of document

- Preamble

- Principles
  - Founded on 5 core values
  - Provides a framework for ethical decision making

- Guidelines
  - How to apply the principles in various professional settings

- Complaint Procedure

AAPM Code of Ethics Principles

- 10 principles of the AAPM code of ethics are founded on 5 core values

1. Beneficence
2. Autonomy
3. Justice
4. Prudence
5. Honesty

AAPM Code of Ethics Guidelines

- Guidelines are intended to assist in the interpretation and implementation of the 10 principles

  - General Guidelines for Professional Conduct
    - e.g., responsibility to peers and profession, responsibility to the public, responsibility to employer
  - Clinical Ethics
    - e.g., responsibility to patients, relationship with caregivers and other healthcare providers, resources
  - Research Ethics
    - e.g., research involving human and animal participants, publication ethics
  - Education Ethics
    - e.g., Educators, students or trainees
  - Business/Government Ethics
    - e.g., employment ethics, member interactions with vendors

Complaint Procedure

- Complaints against an AAPM member are handled by the AAPM Ethics Committee in a fair and impartial manner

- All complaints treated confidentially

- It is the strong preference of the Ethics Committee to encourage and promote good ethical behavior rather than punish members
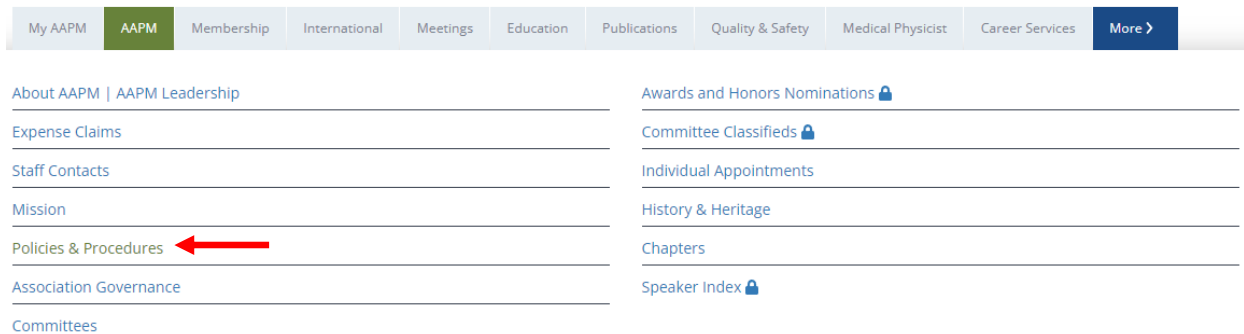
Social Media Use

- What does the code of ethics say regarding Social Media Use?
  - General guidelines for professional conduct
    - Personal Behavior: "Members must be mindful of how their online behavior may reflect on themselves and the profession and use social media in a professional manner"
    - Responsibilities to peers and the profession: "Members have a responsibility to conduct all their work with diligence and integrity"
    - Responsibilities to the public: "Members must strive to improve the public welfare through maintaining standards of privacy in all environments, including online communication"

Social Media Use

- What does the code of ethics say regarding Social Media Use?
  - General guidelines for professional conduct
    - Work environment: "Members should use constructive and supportive language and maintain a respectful demeanor when interacting with all members of the professional community, including patients, research subjects, patients' family members, and other caregivers"
  - Clinical Ethics
    - Responsibility to the patients: "Members should be cognizant of standards of patient privacy and confidentiality that must be maintained in all environments, including online"

AAPM Social Media Policies

- AP 103-A: AAPM Bulletin Board System (BBS) Forum Policy
  - "The objective of this Policy is to ensure that all AAPM-related content on the BBS Forum is consistent with the organization's mission and objectives."

- AP 94-B: Social Media Policy for AAPM groups
  - "The objective of this Policy is to ensure that all AAPM-related content on social media sites is consistent with the organization's mission and objectives."

Thank You!

Social Media Case Study

"Physics to Vault B, physics to Vault B please" was barely audible as it crackled over the speaker system in Radiation Oncology. Ron was in the middle of perusing his social media feeds while he waited for the optimization of his multiple-metastasis brain radiosurgery plan to complete. This was the second time Ron Clarke heard the call for assistance in the last couple of minutes and wondered if anyone else was going to answer it. Ultimately, Ron decided he needed to respond to the help request, so he put his phone away and began the trek to Vault B.

When he got to the vault, his heart sank. He had seen that number of simultaneous faults flashing red on the console screen a couple of times before, and he knew he was in for it. Upon further investigation, it was the ion chamber assembly that had finally stopped working. *"This won't be good,"* he thought. Ron knew that this would cause downtime for the next day at least, if not two. In a very busy clinic of four treatment machines and treating 120 patients per day, that kind of downtime would be a significant strain on the department's resources. "And I get the short straw, again" he muttered to himself. It was his turn to be the late-shift physicist, and it seemed as if these kinds of issues always fell to his rotation. Given the minimal physics staffing in the department, his rotation came up quite often as the hospital had decided to only employ the bare essential staff instead of the recommended number of physicists. Once Ron returned to his workstation to check on his radiosurgery plan, he reopened his social media account and saw a meme of a dog personifying frustration. He copied the meme and posted to his Facebook page with the caption "What it feels like being short staffed at work."

The next day, as the engineers began their disassembly of the gantry head to remove the defunct ion chamber assembly, Ron walked in to check their progress. It was already ten o'clock in the morning, and he had hoped the machine would be close to the testing phase needed to bring the system back into clinical use. However, it was immediately apparent that they were not, as he heard grunts and power tools; two sounds that made him very unsettled when they were occurring around such complex equipment as a linear accelerator head. He took out his cell phone and snapped a semi-irked, yet nonchalant, expression selfie holding the old assembly with the engineers in the background next to the exposed gantry head. A few key taps later, he was ready to post on his Facebook page the selfie with the caption: "Looks like it's going to be ANOTHER late night tonight! Wouldn't it be great if we had reliable technology *shrug emoji* #lovemyjob." One more flick of the finger and the post had been posted to his feed.

Ron sat back down to open the radiosurgery plan he had been working on the previous day. The plan was due soon as it was already Wednesday, and the patient was scheduled for the end of the week. He sighed in frustration: There were so many clinical needs that required attention, losing an entire afternoon yesterday, an entire afternoon today, and most likely the evening would set him further behind. Once he got a fresh optimization started, he pulled his phone out of his pocket. *"Time to get caught up on my social media feeds,"* he thought as he opened his Facebook app. While scrolling through the various posts about last night's dinners, the obligatory first-day-of-school kids' pictures, and targeted ads, he noticed he had a notification awaiting him. Pressing the on-screen notification bell, Ron saw that he had a new Friend Request. "Leon Smith has sent you a friend request" the notification read. Leon was currently a patient on treatment in the department, and Ron had chatted with him a little bit during his CT simulation that he had been called in to consult with the radiation therapists about the setup.

Ron and Leon were both around the same age, and had both grown up in Chicago during the famous Chicago Bulls championship runs. Ron was Irish and grew up in Lakeview, while Leon was African American and lived in Garfield Park near the United Center. Upon discovering their common stomping grounds, Ron had made sure to pop in near the vault every few days where Leon was getting treatments to see if he had caught the latest scores and lament about how the golden days of Bulls' basketball were over. Now, eyes fixed on the screen, he thought "*I've never had a patient want to connect with me on Social Media before,*" perplexed. *"What is the protocol for this? Does it even matter?"* Ron concluded that, surely it would not be a big deal if he accepted the request, and hit the "Confirm" button. Turning his attention back to the optimization, he liked what he saw. He knew this would be the plan version to show the physician for approval. Not ten minutes later, a flag notification caught his eye from the Facebook icon on his home screen. Ron opened the app to check it out, and he saw that Leon had "liked" his posts about short staffing and the down machine.

Shortly after getting the physician to review and approve the plan, Ron had checked back in at Vault B to get a status update. Thankfully he could begin testing soon, but at almost three in the afternoon, his concerns of a long evening had been realized. As he was walking back to his desk to begin preparing the radiosurgery plan for patient-specific quality assurance, he felt a buzz in his pocket. Ron reached into his pocket to see what the prompting was, and rolled his eyes. His screen was displaying a reminder of an upcoming, mandatory webinar on the hospital's newly adopted policy on Equity, Diversity, and Inclusion (EDI) that afternoon. Ron had forgotten about this meeting, and although he knew the importance of EDI in the workplace, he could still feel the frustration of sitting through another meeting that would lead to an even later night.

After arriving at the department-wide meeting, Ron chose a seat in the back. By sitting in the back of the room, he could at least scroll social media during the EDI presentation. After a few minutes into the presentation, he came upon an article about a lawsuit involving Affirmative Action that had made it all the way to the Supreme Court. Ron started another Facebook post with the comment "Stuck in another mandatory meeting about a controversial topic" with the link to the news article. Ron clicked "Post" and put his phone away.

After the meeting ended, Ron strode back to his desk to try and squeeze in some more work before needing to be at Vault B for testing of the repaired machine. Once he sat down and logged in to his workstation, he checked his email per his routine. One of his unread emails from that afternoon caught his attention immediately. It was from his Chief Physicist, and the title read "On the Use of Social Media." Ron exhaled slowly and slumped into his chair as he moved his mouse to open the email. *"What could this be about?"* he wondered.