

UNIVERSITI TEKNOLOGI MARA

**PROPOSING A FRAMEWORK FOR
A NEW GUIDELINE ON SOCIAL
MEDIA USAGE FOR MEDICAL
PRACTITIONERS IN MALAYSIA**

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ABSTRACT

During the current Coronavirus Disease (Covid-19) pandemic, social media usage has escalated. Medical practitioners use this platform to develop content, daily communications, socialise, advertise their services, and deliver health education and research. The use of social media by medical professionals poses several new ethical issues such as confidentiality and conflict of interest. They may struggle to adapt to the online environment, and they may not think about how their online posts may affect patients or the public. The medical practitioners' mistakes in creating inappropriate online content may reflect poorly on the profession. This can also potentially affect personal privacy and the traditional doctor-patient relationship. Several countries, including the UK and the Australia, have set standards for healthcare workers. Currently, in Malaysia, there are two social media guidelines for medical practitioners, called as Guidelines for the Use of Social Media among Health Care Providers and Guidelines for Monitoring the Use of Social Media among Health Care Providers and one ethical code which is *Tata Etika Penggunaan Media Sosial* developed by the Malaysian Ministry of Health in 2016. These guidelines and Code do not apply to private medical practitioners. Notably, both guidelines and Code have not been revised since 2016. Social media is always evolving, and it is possible that there may be some gaps in the guidelines. The Code of Professional Conduct and Good Medical Practice by the Malaysian Medical Council have guidance on social media usage but they are fragmented. As a result, medical practitioners lack guidance. Hence, a proper guideline is required to oversee both public and private medical practitioners' use of social media. Therefore, this research will discuss the loopholes of the existing governance on social media use for medical practitioners in Malaysia as well as to analyse and compare the guidelines on social media use for medical practitioners in the England and Wales, and Australia. Hence, a new framework for a new guideline can be proposed to protect the professionalism of medical practitioners and govern both public and private healthcare.

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CHAPTER ONE

INTRODUCTION

1.1 Background of the Research

Communication tools are pioneered by computers, and later, people could effortlessly access social media through smartphones. According to Hudson (2020), social media refers to applications or any websites designed to permit users to share any type of content in real-time, efficiently and in a matter of seconds. Social media can also be referred to as any internet communication tool that enables users to engage with one another as well as share content broadly and simultaneously (Matthew Hudson, 2020). Generally, instant messaging is similar to social media because the instant messaging is a method of online communication that allows real-time text transmission over the Internet which is similar to social media (Amanda H, 2019).

Generally, social media platforms include an extensive variety of applications and websites such as Twitter, Facebook, Instagram, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, Telegram, and the current famous application, Tiktok. These apps are designed as a platform to communicate with one another, as well as to maximise the sharing and exchange of photos, videos, thoughts, and information. Anyone with access to the internet can create a social media account. They can use that account to post any type of content, which will be visible to anyone who visits their account. However, if the users make the profile private, hence it is hard for other users to visit the profiles. Therefore, social media platforms are utilised by business people, politicians, and other professionals, including those in the healthcare field, as social media platforms can offer them vast potential benefits (Dollarhide, 2021).

However, the usage of social media poses a particular threat to the public perceptions of specific professions in recent years (Flex Tal, 2020; Greysen et al., 2010). This is proven when lawyers and teachers have been disciplined or sacked for online transgressions that are seen to contravene societal expectations according to how they represent their personal lives in the public domain (Schwartz., 2009; Shapira., 2018). Also, according to Greysen et al. (2010), medical practitioners are now involved in similar incidents. Some studies have shown that unprofessional content is frequent