#mypatientisbloggingaboutme: The Influence of Social Media on Patient/Family Interactions and Care (SA540)

Vanessa Battista, MS RN CPNP, The Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA
Jennifer Walter, MD PhD MS, The Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA
Donna McKlindon, MSN RN, The Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA
Dana Dombrowski, MSW LSW, The Children’s Hospital of Philadelphia, Philadelphia, PA

Objectives

- Identify ways in which social media affects providers, patients, and families and their interactions with each other.
- Describe ethical considerations and guidelines for managing appropriate boundaries and therapeutic relationships with respect to social media.
- Describe three methods for talking with patients and families about social media use in the context of the healthcare setting.

In 2013, 73% of online adults in America used social media, and 90% of those ages 18 to 29 used it. Social media has become pervasive in healthcare, with patients and families using it for emotional support, to gather information, and to advocate for services denied by healthcare teams. Many healthcare providers are ambivalent about whether social media supports or undermines their relationship with families, but it is clear that it affects not only the ways in which we communicate with patients and families, but also how patients and families communicate with each other. For palliative care, in which communication is the cornerstone of interactions with patients and families and greatly influences decision-making and goal setting, the effects of social media can have a wide-ranging impact.

Using multimedia, lecture, and discussion, this session will provide an overview of social media and its distinct impact on the practice of palliative care, with an emphasis on its influence on communication and decision-making. Social media resources frequently used by patients and families will be reviewed, and their impact on healthcare providers and the medical care provided will be highlighted. Topics will include (1) how patient or family use of social media affects providers, including a review of the literature and cases (eg, how providers feel when they know patients and families are blogging about them and the effects this has on interactions and subsequent decisions regarding care); (2) the influence of social media on patients and families, including how patients gather information about available treatments, social media’s role in offering emotional support, especially when far from home, and how patients may begin to acquire a public persona that affects their flexibility in decision-making; (3) ethical guidance on setting appropriate boundaries and maintaining therapeutic relationships with patients and families who want to stay connected via social media; and (4) tips for talking with patients and families about their participation in social media and how it affects providers’ interactions with them.