

SWOG SOCIAL MEDIA PROCEDURES

Social media provide powerful tools for clinical research collaboration, and a medium for connecting with our patients and community stakeholders. Social media channels are valuable to scientific cooperation, professional development, and promotion of SWOG and its members and member institutions.

SWOG encourages the use of social media among members and staff. However, inappropriate online behavior may risk the privacy and/or reputation of SWOG, our members, or our partner institutions.

This policy and related guidelines apply when SWOG members and staff participate in social media for professional purposes – but should also be considered if personal social media activities may give the appearance of speaking for or about SWOG or The Hope Foundation.

Get Involved

All SWOG members are invited to participate in the [closed Facebook Group](#), SWOG Oncology. This is a place for professional networking, shared insights, and celebrated successes within the SWOG community.

Although this digital channel is reserved exclusively for SWOG and Hope Foundation participants, remember that no content shared here is completely private.

You are encouraged to be honest and open in your posting, while also using appropriate discretion, and following the house rules posted on the Facebook page.

Confidentiality and Privacy

Online postings and conversations are not private. Remember that what you post may be around for a long time, and could be shared by others with or without your consent.

Avoid revealing confidential and protected information about others, including patients, fellow SWOG members or staff, or partner institutions, unless you have their permission. Obtain permission before posting pictures of others or before posting copyrighted information.

Never use or disclose any member or patient identifiable information of any kind. Even a small, seemingly harmless detail shared may lead to a breach of someone's privacy. Find more on the SWOG HIPAA Privacy Rule, [here](#).

As a SWOG member, you will be privy to information that is not appropriate or designed for the general public, patient test results or member phone numbers. Please use discretion, if or when you choose to share internal SWOG information with those outside of our organization.

Never discuss proprietary SWOG information such as protocol designs or pharmaceutical agreements.

Respect

An aim of social media is to create dialogue; in discussing issues, people won't always agree. When confronted with a difference of opinion, keep your cool. Avoid conflict, but do correct mistakes when needed. Sometimes, it's best to ignore a comment.

Be conscientious about the way in which you express political or cultural beliefs that may come across as insensitive to others. With nearly 12,000 members at over 1,000 sites in the US and six other countries, it's imperative to consider the context of your online comments and to be intentional and respectful in your language use.

Consider whether those outside of our organization could misrepresent these messages. Good situational awareness is the key to safe and successful social media engagement.

Transparency

Even when you are talking as an individual, people may perceive you to be talking on behalf of SWOG. If you discuss topics related to SWOG or the Hope Foundation, be upfront and explain what organization you work for.

If you are not an official SWOG spokesperson, consider adding a disclaimer to your social media sites, indicating that your personal posts are your own, e.g.: "*The opinions and positions expressed here are my own and may not reflect those of my employer.*"

Only those authorized to do so may use the SWOG or Hope Foundation logo in communications.

Just as your patients or fellow researchers look to you for guidance, those outside of the organization may look to you as a trusted information source about SWOG. Others may even consider you an *unofficial spokesperson*.

We encourage you to exercise discretion and good use of your own platform privacy settings, as you consider what to share and who to engage with online. You are personally responsible, and potentially liable, for any content you publish. In conjunction with SWOG guidelines, be sure to follow any and all social media policies set out by your home institution.

Patient Engagement

Patients and patient advocates are increasingly using social media to learn about and seek out clinical trial participation opportunities. This online conversation can provide valuable insights for clinicians and researchers, who are looking for opportunities to improve their recruitment strategies or trial experience.

However, participating in these conversation may inadvertently put you or your patients' privacy at risk. Before you engage with any patient posts, consider these important tips:

- Avoid "friending" patients across any social media platform.
- Do not post patient images without appropriate written consent.
- Avoid engaging with patient updates that include mention of personal information or specific medical condition. By "Liking" or sharing these posts, you could disclose patient status on their behalf.
- Be sure to understand the [18 unique identifiers protected under HIPAA](#).
- Always adhere to your institution's specific social media policy.

Trial Recruitment

Researchers may leverage these platforms to promote and recruit for their trials, so long as they follow the appropriate process and federal protections.

Before using social media to advertise a trial, be sure to review the [SWOG policy on advertising for subject recruitment](#) and [NIH/NCI guidelines for social media recruitment](#).

Media Engagement

Only specifically designated SWOG and Hope Foundation staff members are authorized to communicate with the media on behalf of our organization.

If a member of the media approaches you, including bloggers or online media, let them know you are not authorized to speak on the organization's behalf. Obtain their contact information and refer them to the [SWOG Communications and Public Relations Manager](#).

Just as your team or fellow researchers look to you for guidance, those outside of the organization may look to you as a trusted information source about SWOG. Others may even consider you an *unofficial spokesperson*.

If you are in a discussion that relates to SWOG, The Hope Foundation, our partner institutions, or our trials, don't make unsubstantiated claims. If you comment on something specific, try to verify details through organization-published information.

Be sensitive about linking to external online content. Redirecting to another site may imply an endorsement of its content. Find more information on the SWOG PR and Media policy, [here](#).

Disclosures and Resources

If or when you are made aware of inappropriate online behavior by a SWOG member or staff, or have other questions related to SWOG's organizational use of social media, contact the [SWOG Communications and Public Relations Manager](#).

SWOG prohibits leadership from compelling a member or partner to provide access to personal social media accounts.

SWOG prohibits leadership from retaliating based on a member or prospective member's refusal to disclose or provide access to social media accounts.

- For questions or concerns related to this policy, contact the SWOG Communications team: <http://swog.org/Visitors/StaffDirectory.asp#operationsoffice>
- For more SWOG policies: <http://swog.org/Visitors/Policies.asp>
- For Hope Foundation policies: <https://thehopefoundation.org/documents/>