

Dermatopathology and Social Media: Improving Participation by Increasing Clarity

To the Editor.—In the June 2017 issue of *Archives of Pathology & Laboratory Medicine*, Carlquist et al provided an excellent study into the use of social media in the medical profession and, in particular, in dermatopathology.¹ With a real dearth of studies into the use of social media and technology in medical education,² it is fantastic to see such exemplary work performed by the authors. Although the authors noted a number of reasons for the potential underperformance of the dermatopathology population in comparison to the general population, we would like to suggest another. We think that there is potentially a lack of insight and information into the regulations concerning sharing information and patient confidentiality and, hence, a skepticism among physicians about the use of social media, in particular, regarding case information. We think, therefore, that if more clarity was given to physicians on what is permissible without violating confidentiality, there would be a concurrent rise in the use of social media, especially in dermatopathology, leading to a positive effect on medical education.

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2. Sutherland S, Jalali A. Social media as an open-learning resource in medical education: current perspectives. *Adv Med Educ Pract*. 2017;8(6):369–375.

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In Reply.—We appreciate the kind remarks about our article and are glad that readers find it of value. We completely agree that more published research studies are needed to continue to demonstrate the value and utility of social media in the fields of pathology and dermatopathology. Peer-reviewed publications will further cement social media in place as a fixture of modern pathology practice and will hopefully help to convince reluctant pathologists that social media is indeed a legitimate professional activity. Patient privacy issues are among the most common concerns voiced by pathologists regarding pathology social media use. Obviously, respecting patient privacy is just as important online as it is in every other aspect of our lives and medical practices. Not only must HIPAA (Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act of 1996) rules be obeyed, but even more importantly, the overarching ethical

principles of patient privacy must be respected. In our article, we cited a recent publication by Crane and Gardner¹ that discusses patient privacy issues in comprehensive detail and provides a variety of specific recommendations to help pathologists ensure that patient privacy is never compromised when sharing images of a case on social media. To quote from their article: “Social media posts are, in fact, not materially different from traditional medical journal case report publications, so the same ethical standards should apply to each.” We would refer readers to their publication for more in-depth information on this topic.¹ We hope that their guidance will provide clarity and will soundly convince other pathologists and dermatopathologists that social media can and should be used in a safe, professional, and effective manner that will enhance education and collaboration among members of our specialty.

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