

YOU'VE ASKED

Personal Use of Social Media

SCENARIO: Eric's profile on his Twitter account identifies him as an RN working at one of the local hospitals. In responding from home to a tweet on the weekend, Eric posts multiple derogatory comments about his workplace which are retweeted by others. A member of the public, shocked and worried about the truthfulness of these comments decides to call the Nurses Association of NB to inquire about lodging a complaint for "unprofessional online comments".

Last December, newspapers across Canada reported on a case involving a nurse practising in Saskatchewan who was found guilty of professional misconduct for having expressed her concerns about the quality of care given to a family member by using her Twitter and Facebook accounts.

More and more, communication using social media is being "followed", "retweeted", commented upon and shared sometimes beyond the intended audience. This growing appetite for newsworthy "chatting" highlights the need for registered nurses to be very vigilant when using social media platforms for communication.

Social media in its many different forms, has become very easy to use and a preferred means for communicating with family and friends. While you may think using social media tools for these purposes is your "personal business", you must be aware that the information or opinion you shared can cross over to your professional world and have a negative impact on how you are seen as



a professional.

The *Nurses Act* states that RNs are accountable to the profession and for any "conduct unbecoming of a member including any conduct that might adversely affect the standing or good name of the practice of nursing or the Association [Nurses Act, 2002, 28 (1), ii)]. This expectation applies to all RNs and can include conduct that occur outside the "work time" or practice setting.

When using social media, RNs are responsible for their actions and comments and accountable not only to their client, but also to their employer, the profession they represent and the public they serve.

To participate responsibly in the online world, consider these tips/ pointers:

- build your own social media competence, know the legislation and the technology and have the skills and judgment to use it appropriately and ethically;
- abstain from making disparaging remarks about employer or co-workers (e.g., threatening, harassing, profane, obscene, sexually explicit, racially derogatory, homophobic, or other offensive comments);
- be aware of and follow workplace policies concerning the use of personal or work issued social media tools when at work, including how to manage a privacy breach; and
- do not post content or otherwise speak on behalf of the employer unless authorized to do so, following all applicable employer policies.

For more information about the use of social media tools in relation to RN's responsibilities, contact NANB at 1-800-442-4417 or by email at nanb@nanb.nb.ca.

References

Nurses Association of New Brunswick (2002). *Nurses Act*. Fredericton: Author.

Nurses Association of New Brunswick (2012). *Practice Guideline: Ethical and Responsible Use of Social Media Technologies*. Fredericton: Author.