**NANB**

# Fact Sheet
# Mobile Devices and Information Technologies' Use in the Workplace

Mobile devices can be used in different ways that include but is not limited to information technologies (ITs) such as texts, emails, pictures and apps. The purpose of this document is to provide factual information regarding mobile devices and ITs in the workplace that impact the profession of nursing and is not intended to replace any applicable legislation or employer policies.

Before using these various forms of technologies within the workplace, registered nurses (RN) and nurse practitioners (NP) should ask themselves: are there policies that authorize or govern the use of this technology within the workplace? If not, RNs and NPs are encouraged to advocate for the creation of such policies.

Understanding the risks involved in using mobile devices and ITs in nursing may prevent potential adverse personal and professional consequences. Here are some key elements to consider when using mobile devices and ITs in the workplace.

### Privacy Breach

RNs and NPs have a professional and legal obligation to protect the privacy of patients' personal health information (PHI). This is commonly accomplished through the use of strong passwords and encryption to safeguard electronic PHI being communicated through mobile devices. Employers generally have policies that require the use of such safeguards (Canadian Nurses Protective Society [CNPS], 2013).

### Workplace Integration

More commonly, healthcare employers are implementing bring-your-own-device (BYOD) programs in which employees are permitted or even encouraged to use their own mobile devices in the workplace. Employers with BYOD programs will generally implement corresponding policies, protocols and systems that enable healthcare practitioners to use wireless devices to securely interact with other healthcare practitioners and to access patient records (CNPS, 2013).

### Managing Expectations

In addition to managing the privacy and security concerns associated with these communications, RNs and NPs are reminded to manage patient expectations about permitted purposes of these communications, how quickly they will respond to enquiries and what to do if they are unavailable. Reasonable limits and response times can then be clearly communicated to patients (CNPS, 2013).

**Infection Control**

The study of Kanayama et al. (2017) revealed the presence of Methicillin-resistant Staphylococcus aureus (MRSA) and other forms of bacteria on mobile devices and palms and fingers of nurses. For this reason, hand hygiene should be repeated after use of mobile devices and prior to patient contact.

**RNs and NPs – Other Important Information to Consider**

The following considerations are not an exhaustive list and RNs and NPs always need to refer to legislation and employer policies. Self-employed RNs and NPs also need to have policies in place that address the use of mobile devices and ITs in their workplace. Please take note that NANB does not promote or encourage the use of mobiles devices or any ITs.

| Information technology | Important to consider |
|---|---|
| Texts | -Verify employer policies to determine if transmission of information by text is permitted.<br>-If permitted, determine what content can be transmitted by text.<br>-Get informed about what mobile device you should use for work: personal mobile device or employer-issued mobile device.<br>-Be cautious regarding patient security and confidentiality before texting.<br>-Be very vigilant with autocorrect and typos: errors could cause serious harm.<br>-Documentation requirements: consult the Standards for Documentation and employer policies. |
| Emails | -Be familiar with and follow employer policies.<br>-Consider obtaining the patient's written consent before transmitting PHI via email or, alternatively, document the patient's verbal consent.<br>-Use encryption when sending to an external email recipient.<br>-Confirm the correct email address for the intended recipient before transmitting PHI.<br>- Never share identifiable PHI with a client through your personal email address. |
| Photos | -Are there clear employer policies on use of mobile devices to take photographs of clients?<br>-Refrain from using personal mobile device and use employer-issued mobile device if possible, because of high risk.<br>-Client must consent before taking picture.<br>-Consent must be documented.<br>-Photo is part of the health care record and must be deleted from mobile device immediately after its use.<br>-STOP – ask yourself – **IS THIS REALLY NECESSARY**? Is there an alternative? |

| Healthcare Apps | -Only use apps from reliable sources, that are updated frequently and approved by employer, if applicable.<br>-Ensure you have sufficient training and knowledge to use the apps.<br>-Review and set appropriate privacy settings on apps and mobile devices.<br>-Avoid relying on apps to complete task you could not otherwise complete on your own.<br>-Always remember – **APPS DO NOT TAKE THE PLACE OF PROFESSIONAL JUDGMENT.**<br>-Frequently update apps to ensure they have not been discontinued.<br>-Avoid recommending apps to a patient unless you have full confidence in it and, if applicable, employer has endorsed it. |
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*Information retrieved from the CNPS's webinar on Social Media and Technology that took place February 13 2019.*

# Resources

[Privacy and Access](#) (GNB)

[Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses](#) (CNA) (Maintaining Privacy and Confidentiality-pp.14-15)

[Fact Sheet: Privacy of Personal Health Information](#) (CNA)

[Legal Risks of Email - Part 1 Privacy Concerns](#) (CNPS)

[Legal Risks of Email - Part 2 Practical Considerations](#) (CNPS)

[Legal Case Study: Distraction by Cell Phone](#) (CNPS) (Only available in English)

[Mobile Devices in the Workplace](#) (CNPS)

[Social Media In Professional Practice: The Courts' Perspective Webinar - Resources](#) (CNPS) (Only available in English)

[Mobile Health-care Apps](#) (CNPS)


# References

Canadian Nurses Protective Society. (2013). Mobile Devices in the Workplace. *infoLAW, 21*(1), 1-2.

Kanayama, A.K., Takahashi, H., Yoshizawa, S., Tateda, K., Kaneko, A., & Kobayashi, I. (2017). Staphylococcus Aureus Surface Contamination of Mobile Phones and Presence of Genetically Identical Strains on the Hands of Nursing Personnel. *American Journal of Infection Control*, *45*, 929-931. http://dx.doi.org/10.1016/j.ajic.2017.02.011