



CONDUCT COUNTS!

Social Media

SCENARIO

Tina, RRT has been so frustrated at work lately. The RTs never seem to get any advance notification when a patient is going to be transported, and so there ends up being a last minute scramble that inevitably comes at the busiest time. She and others, asked their PPL to raise this as a concern at meetings with the other profession leaders, but so far, no one has changed the way that they initiate transports. To make matters worse, when Tina told an RN (the one who was giving her a hard time about being kept waiting for a transport) to “back her truck up”, the RN complained to the ICU manager. As a result of that incident, Tina received a warning about her communication style. Being scolded for expressing her frustration only made Tina more exasperated! She thought that if the hospital would just develop a procedure for notifying the RTs when the physician orders transport, then this could all have been avoided!

Tina was still angry about it when she logged on to Facebook™ that evening, she updated her status to “annoyed” and posted that she “works [sic] with a bunch of dummies who can’t see past the end of the noses on their faces! Don’t send your loved ones to us!!!”

Not surprisingly, Tina has colleagues as friends on Facebook™ who replied to her post with comments like: “gee thanks Tina!”, “glad you’re so perfect...!”, and “lol...hope your boss doesn’t read this.” When she returned to work two days later Tina was called to a meeting with HR and her manager. She was told that she was being suspended for a day for her online post because the hospital felt that it was unprofessional and contrary to several policies. In addition, the hospital would be submitting a report to the CRTO (as they were required to do).

RESULTS

The CRTO received a report from the hospital which included a copy of Tina’s post, the emails of complaint that her colleagues sent to management, and the hospital’s policies on social media, a safe work environment, and employees’ code of conduct. It was determined that Tina’s behaviour – although it took place outside of practice hours – was related to her professional conduct because she was commenting on her healthcare professional colleagues and practice setting.

The panel ordered Tina to complete the eLearning Module on social media.



PROFESSIONALISM

“Professionalism” or professional conduct is a term often used to describe the behaviours that are expected of individuals who hold a certain role in society. A “professional” is typically someone who has obtained skills that are recognized as requiring specific, intensive training and who applies those skills in a position impacting others (e.g., engineer, lawyer, RT, PT, MD, etc.). Professionals are often held to moral, ethical and legal standards because of this potential impact.



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EXPECTATION

The panel of the Inquiries, Complaints and Reports Committee felt that Tina's conduct may have breached the standards of practice, including:

Accountability:

- Section 1.12: Aspiring to a high level of professional efficacy at all times;

Therapeutic & Professional Relationships:

- Section 4.12: Considering the welfare of the patient/client above all else;
- Section 4.15: Collaborating and co-operating with peers and other health professionals to the extent needed to serve the best interest of patients/clients; and

Professional Misconduct Regulation:

- Section 29: Engaging in conduct or performing an act, relevant to the practice of the profession, that, having regard to all the circumstances, would reasonably be regarded by members as disgraceful, dishonourable or unprofessional.

The panel considered statements from colleagues that supported Tina's assertion that there have been ongoing issues at the hospital related to communications about the transport of patients. It did appear to the panel that some Respiratory Therapists are frustrated that they are not being given sufficient notice of, nor consulted on patient transports which interrupt their workflow in a busy hospital. However, it is not the CRTO's (or the panel's) role to offer an opinion on how facilities manage their resources. Regardless of the issue(s) at the centre of Tina's frustration, the panel was of the opinion that an online outburst would never be helpful for resolving problems or appropriate when communicating with colleagues. In order to work collaboratively and effectively together, in the best interest of patients, healthcare professionals must foster an environment of respect and trust. According to the CRTO's Abuse Awareness and Prevention Professional Practice Guideline, "RTs must always conduct themselves within [professional] relationships in a manner that is free of all forms of abuse" and that "the standards for interactions in these professional relationships mirror the standards that apply to therapeutic relationships."

BOTTOM LINE

Pause before you post. If you wouldn't send the exact same message to your manager, director or CEO in a personal email, then don't put it online.

RESOURCES

eLearning Module on Social Media: [Pause Before You Post](#)

[Abuse Awareness & Prevention Professional Practice Guideline](#)

