

CAGS Professionalism Committee

Recommendations for Electronic Communication

1. All communications with patients, colleagues and the public should be respectful and consistent with privacy and confidentiality guidelines.
2. The use of email to communicate with patients should be established in a person-to-person discussion with the patient. Issues of privacy, timeliness and content should be discussed. A consent form that addresses these issues may be useful.
3. Email should not be used to begin a new surgeon patient relationship.
4. Email communication with colleagues and institutions must follow guidelines for privacy and confidentiality, especially relating to patient information.
5. Educational activities such as journal clubs and seminars can benefit from the use of electronic communication for notification of time, place and date, and for distribution of reference material. Discussions in the form of case reports or the "difficult case" must ensure that patient privacy is maintained.
6. Personal involvement and disclosure by surgeons taking part in social media should be considered from the point of view that there might be interactions with patients. Information (not necessarily just medical information) should be provided that does not impact or potentially impact the surgeon patient relationship.