

PRACTICE ADVISORY STATEMENT

Social Media

The use of social media platforms and online networking forums are rapidly expanding in our society and have become a vital communication vehicle as well as a means to access and share health information. Social media and networking technologies pose ethical and professional considerations for medical laboratory technologists (MLTs); therefore, it is imperative to remember and maintain one's professional integrity and obligations when communicating through social media or other online means. An MLT may not appreciate the significant risks associated with online behaviour, including potential discipline for unprofessional content online. MLTs should be mindful of the following when using social media.

Confidentiality

- Protect the privacy, security, and confidentiality of client¹ information. This applies to healthcare information and any other client information you have received during the performance of your MLT duties. Do not reveal any information which may directly or indirectly identify a client or their medical history or any personal information. The disclosure of even a few basic facts may be sufficient to identify a client to a family member or friend.
- Assume all online content is public and accessible by everyone.
- Do not assume an individual can maintain control over the audience. Content intended for a limited audience may be disseminated beyond an individual's control in a very short period of time.

Professionalism

- Refer to all clients in a professional manner.
- Do not disseminate information which may demean or embarrass a client or clients generally or which could harm the integrity of the MLT profession in the eyes of the public.
- Do not post disparaging remarks about clients, colleagues, supervisors, the profession, or a regulatory body.
- Pseudonyms will not make inappropriate content somehow appropriate.
- Be mindful of a personal internet presence and be proactive in removing or editing content which may be viewed as unprofessional.
- Be aware privacy settings are imperfect and may be compromised.

Maintain Boundaries

- Do not initiate online contact with clients.
- Carefully consider any request from a client for online communication.

¹ Client refers to an individual, family and/or substitute decision-maker, patient, group, agency, employer, colleague, other healthcare practitioner, or stakeholder who is a recipient of the MLT's professional and health services.

Employer Policies and Maintaining Security

- Be aware of and comply with relevant employer policies specific to social media usage or general policies on computer and internet usage.
- Maintain passwords and safe storage for all smartphones, tablets and other mobile devices that contain client information.

The College of Medical Laboratory Technologists of Alberta (CMLTA) is the provincial regulatory body for MLTs. The CMLTA is entrusted with regulating the professional practice of MLTs in a manner which enhances patient safety and preserves public protection. MLTs are responsible and accountable and must adhere to professional standards and guiding principles germane to the practice of medical laboratory science, including: the CMLTA Standards of Practice; the CMLTA Code of Ethics; the Health Professions Act; and the Medical Laboratory Technologists Profession Regulation.

The CMLTA publishes Practice Advisory Statements as a means to assist and guide MLTs in the provision of safe, competent, and ethical healthcare services. Practice Advisory Statements support, but do not replace the exercise of professional judgment by MLTs.