

Certain online behaviors of docs warrant investigation

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S. Ryan Greysen, M.D., M.H.S., from the University of California in San Francisco, and colleagues used 10 hypothetical vignettes to gauge the consensus among 48 state medical boards in the United States regarding the likelihood of investigations for violations of online professionalism.

The researchers observed high consensus for the likelihood of investigation for four of the vignettes: providing misleading information

about [clinical outcomes](#) (81 percent); using patient images without consent (79 percent); misrepresenting credentials (77 percent); and contacting patients inappropriately (77 percent). Moderate consensus was found for three vignettes: depicting [alcohol intoxication](#) (73 percent); violating patient confidentiality (65 percent); and using discriminatory speech (60 percent). Low consensus was seen for the remaining three vignettes (using derogatory speech toward patients, showing alcohol use without intoxication, and providing clinical [narratives](#) with no confidentiality violation).

"In conclusion, we found a high degree of consensus among state medical boards about the likelihood of investigation for certain online behaviors, whereas consensus in other areas was lower and more dependent on context," the authors write. "Our findings underscore the need for more continuing education of physicians in practice about potential interpretations and consequences of online actions so that their social media presence can be a professional benefit instead of a liability."

More information: [Full Text \(subscription or payment may be required\)](#)

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