

## Freedom of Information results

*Between 1 Jan 2018 and 01 Jan 2020 how many cases relating to doctors possible inappropriate use of social media - Facebook, Twitter, Instagram, What's App and other platforms were made? investigated and closed?*

The below is a table which shows the number of unique enquiries with allegations related to social media use. In order to locate these enquiries we looked at two specific allegations- *'breach of confidentiality – social media'* and *'fail to maintain trust – social media,'* as well as carrying out text searches for the following terms: 'facebook', 'twitter', 'snapchat', 'WhatsApp', 'Instagram', 'social media', 'blog' and 'google'. We only started recording allegations at enquiry level in 2017 so cannot provide data before then.

Table S1

<b>#Unique Enquiries at Triage</b>			
<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>	<b>Grand total</b>
49	136	118	<b>303</b>

The below is a table showing outcomes of those enquiries. Please note that an enquiry may relate to more than one doctor which explains why the total for this table is higher than the Unique Enquiries at Triage table. It also includes 21 triage decisions where the doctor could not be identified (three in 2017, 11 in 2018 and seven in 2019.)

Table S2

<b>Triage Stream</b>	<b># Triages by triage year</b>		
	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>
Investigation	9	10	16
Refer to Employer/ Responsible Officer	5	5	19
Provisional Enquiry	1	0	0
Closed	37	134	96

<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>149</b>	<b>131</b>
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*Of those closed which social media platforms did they relate to?*

Table S3

	Case closed date		
<b>Social media platform</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>
Facebook	2	5	9
Google	0	0	1
Instagram	0	0	1
Other	1	0	1
Twitter	1	3	2
Unknown*	13	13	10
Whatsapp	2	0	3
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>27</b>

\*Unknown indicates that the social media platform was not mentioned within the structured case data

*What were the outcomes (warnings/referred to employer/suspended registration etc)*

Table S4

	Case closed date		
<b>Case outcome</b>	<b>2017</b>	<b>2018</b>	<b>2019</b>
No further action following investigation	13	14	17
Closed following investigation with Advice	1	3	3

Sanctions applied following investigation - Warning	4	1	4
Sanctions applied following investigation - Undertaking	1	0	1
Sanctions applied at Hearing - Suspension	0	3	1
Sanctions applied at Hearing - Erasure	0	0	1
<b>Grand Total</b>	<b>19</b>	<b>21</b>	<b>27</b>

Case outcomes may be the result of multiple allegations, not all of which will necessarily relate to social media use. For cases that reached a hearing the social media allegation(s) were proven and so were a factor in the case outcome.

## Survey

How do you perceive medical doctors Twitter activity?

Thank you for participating in this survey.

This survey hopes to explore your opinions regarding Twitter activities of medical doctors. We are looking for a broad range of opinions from doctors, healthcare professionals, patients and lay people. The questions relate to those that you identify as being clinical doctors on Twitter. We would be grateful if you could answer all questions. All answers will be recorded anonymously.

THE SURVEY SHOULD TAKE ON AVERAGE 3 MINUTES TO COMPLETE. THIS SURVEY IS ENTIRELY VOLUNTARY

By completing the questions in the survey you consent to your answers being used for the purpose of a report or publication.

Thank you very much for your participation.

\* Required

1.

Which of the following best describes you? (please tick all that apply) \*

*Check all that apply.*

Doctor

Nurse

Allied healthcare professional

Non-clinical staff in the NHS

Patient (defined as a chronic condition or hospital admission within 6 months)

Lay person (no chronic conditions or hospitalisations in last 6 months)

2.What age group are you? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

<18  
18-29  
30-49  
50-69  
70+  
Prefer not to say

3. What gender do you define yourself as? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Male  
Female  
Non binary  
Prefer not to say

4. Where do you live? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

United Kingdom  
Europe excluding the UK  
North America  
Australia/oceania  
Asia  
Africa  
South America

5. Have you ever witnessed unprofessional behaviour from doctors on Twitter? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Yes  
No  
Not sure

6. On average, how often do you check your Twitter account? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

less than once a day

1-9 times a day

10 or more times a day

7. Have you ever witnessed an incident on Twitter where doctors could have potentially breached confidentiality of patients? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Yes

No

Not sure

8. Do you think Twitter should fact check the content posted by doctors?

*Mark only one oval.*

Yes

No

Not sure

9. Do you think doctors' regulators should monitor Twitter accounts in line with their code of conduct? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Yes

No

Not sure

10. Do you think doctors employers should monitor doctors twitter accounts? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Yes

No

Not sure

11. Do you think it is acceptable for doctors to post or engage via Twitter regularly throughout the working day? (excluding conferences / events) \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Yes

No

Not sure

12. Should doctors have separate Twitter accounts, one for their professional lives and the other for their lives outside of work? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Yes

No

Not sure

13. Do you think doctors should discuss challenges they may face at work on Twitter? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Yes

No

Not sure

14. Should doctors be allowed to post ads and monetise their Twitter account? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Yes

No

Not sure

15. Have you seen doctors on Twitter advertise services that could have potential to exploit the trust that their position gives them? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Yes

No

Not sure

16. Do you learn from interactions on Twitter between doctors when discussing public health and policy discussions? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Yes

No

Not sure

17. Should doctors be allowed to have an anonymous Twitter account when posting about healthcare? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Yes

No

Not sure

18. It is helpful when doctors tweet about papers they have published? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Yes

No

Not sure

19. Should doctors provide individual medical advice to patients on Twitter? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Yes

No

Not sure

20. Should doctors be able to post pictures of themselves on Twitter in a work related capacity? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Yes

No

Not sure



21. Has a doctor ever posted something on Twitter that has made you mistrust their profession? \*

*Mark only one oval.*

Yes

No

Not sure

**Table S5.** Univariate factors associated with mistrust in the profession

Variable	Subcategory	Mistrust yes	Mistrust Yes	Mistrust No	Mistrust no	Mistrust not sure	Mistrust not sure	P value
			%		%		%	
Role	Doctor	175	34.31	280	54.90	55	10.78	0.06
	Patient/lay/other	55	10.78	137	26.66	25	4.90	
age	<18	2	0.39	9	1.76	7	1.37	<0.01
	18-29	58	11.37	120	23.52	20	3.92	
	30-49	141	27.65	233	45.49	40	7.84	
	50-69	26	5.10	54	10.58	10	1.96	
	>70	1	0.20	1	0.19	3	0.58	
	Prefer not to say	2	0.39	0	0	0	0	
Gender	Male	108	21.17	176	34.50	36	7.05	0.07
	Female	116	22.74	238	46.47	40	7.84	
	Non-binary	3	0.58	1	0.19	1	0.19	
	Prefer not to say	3	0.58	2	0.39	3	0.58	
Location	UK	175	34.31	319	62.54	59	11.56	0.71
	Rest of Europe	28	5.49	53	10.19	8	1.56	
	North America	17	3.33	25	4.90	5	0.98	
	South America	1	0.19	1	0.19	0	0	
	Asia	3	0.58	8	1.56	5	0.98	
	Africa	3	0.58	5	0.98	1	0.19	
	Australasia/Oceania	3	0.58	6	1.17	2	0.39	
Have you ever witnessed	Yes	206	40.19	152	29.80	33	6.47	<0.01

unprofessional behaviour from doctors on Twitter?	No	15	2.94	214	41.96	12	2.35	
	Not sure	10	1.96	50	9.80	35	6.86	
How much time do you spend on twitter	Less than once a day	58	11.37	158	30.98	34	6.66	<0.01
	One- nine times a day	136	26.47	208	40.78	29	5.68	
	>10	37	7.25	50	9.80	17	3.33	
Have you ever witnessed an incident on Twitter where doctors could have potentially breached patient confidentiality?	yes	119	23.33	70	13.72	24	4.70	<0.01
	No	79	15.49	298	58.43	31	6.07	
	Not sure	32	6.274	49	9.41	25	4.901	
Do you think Twitter should fact check the content posted by doctors?	Yes	121	23.72	168	32.74	43	8.43	<0.01
	No	56	10.98	169	33.13	20	3.92	
	Not sure	53	10.39	80	15.68	20	3.92	
Do you think doctors' regulators should monitor Twitter accounts in line with their role of conduct?	Yes	126	24.70	149	29.21	25	4.90	<0.01
	No	69	13.52	206	40.19	36	7.05	
	Not sure	35	6.86	62	12.15	19	3.72	
Do you think doctors' employers should monitor Twitter accounts?	yes	73	14.31	59	11.56	18	3.52	<0.01
	No	128	25.09	304	59.41	46	9.01	
	Not sure	29	5.68	54	10.58	16	3.13	

Do you think it is acceptable for doctors to post or engage via Twitter regularly throughout the working day? (excluding conferences/events)	Yes	116	22.74	241	47.25	39	7.64	0.06
	No	81	15.88	118	22.94	22	4.31	
	Not sure	33	6.47	58	11.37	19	3.72	
Should doctors have separate Twitter accounts one for professional lives and the other for their lives outside of work?	Yes	97	19.01	151	29.60	36	7.05	0.15
	No	87	17.05	189	37.05	26	5.09	
	Not sure	46	9.01	77	14.90	18	3.52	
Do you think doctors should discuss challenges they may face at work on Twitter?	Yes	97	19.01	151	29.60	36	7.05	0.01
	No	87	17.05	189	37.05	26	5.09	
	Not Sure	46	9.01	77	14.90	18	3.52	
Should doctors be allowed to post ads and monetise their Twitter account?	Yes	57	11.17	137	26.86	24	4.70	0.01
	No	139	27.25	190	37.25	41	8.03	
	Not Sure	34	6.66	137	26.86	24	4.70	

Have you seen doctors on Twitter advertise services that could have potential to exploit trust position gives them?	Yes	103	20.19	199	38.82	29	5.68	0.27
	No	93	18.23	149	29.21	33	6.47	
	Not Sure	34	6.66	69	13.52	18	3.52	
Should doctors tweet about papers they have published?	Yes	202	39.60	371	72.54	68	13.33	0.69
	No	12	2.35	14	2.74	4	0.78	
	Not sure	16	3.13	32	6.27	8	1.56	
Should doctors offer medical advice on Twitter?	Yes	18	3.52	41	8.03	6	1.17	0.91
	No	193	37.84	341	66.66	67	13.13	
	Not sure	19	3.72	35	6.86	7	1.37	
Should doctors be able to post pictures of themselves on Twitter in a work-related capacity	Yes	158	30.98	325	63.52	61	11.96	0.13

**Table S6. Baseline characteristics**

		<b>Patient</b>	<b>HCPs</b>	<b>P-value</b>
<b>Age</b>	< 18	18	0	< 0.01
	18 – 29	53	146	
	30 – 49	101	312	
	50 – 69	41	49	
	> 70	2	3	
	Prefer not to say	2	0	
<b>Gender</b>	Male	75	246	< 0.01
	Female	136	257	
	Non – binary	2	3	
	Prefer not to say	4	4	
<b>Frequency of twitter use</b>	< 1 a day	73	177	0.06
	1 – 9 times aday	103	270	
	> 10 times a day	41	63	

**Table S7. Questions included in the Survey**

Question	Yes	No	Not Sure
<b>Have you ever witnessed unprofessional behaviour from doctors on Twitter?</b>	53.6% (390)	33.1% (241)	13.2% (96)
<b>Have you ever witnessed an incident on Twitter where doctors could have potentially breached patient confidentiality?</b>	29.3% (213)	408 (56.1%)	106 (14.6%)
<b>Do you think Twitter should fact check the content posted by doctors?</b>	45.6% (332)	33.7% (245)	20.7% (150)
<b>Do you think doctors' regulators should monitor Twitter accounts in line with their role of conduct?</b>	41.3% (300)	42.6% (310)	16.1% (117)
<b>Do you think doctors' employers should monitor Twitter accounts?</b>	20.6% (150)	65.6% (477)	13.8% (100)
<b>Do you think it is acceptable for doctors to post or engage via Twitter regularly throughout the working day? (excluding conferences/events)</b>	54.5% (396)	30.3% (220)	15.3% (111)
<b>Should doctors have separate Twitter accounts one for professional lives and the other for their lives outside of work?</b>	30.1% (284)	41.5% (302)	19.4% (141)

<b>Do you think doctors should discuss challenges they may face at work on Twitter?</b>	74.4% (541)	13.3% (97)	12.2% (89)
<b>Should doctors be allowed to post ads and monetise their Twitter account?</b>	30% (218)	50.9% (370)	19.1% (139)
<b>Have you seen doctors on Twitter advertise services that could have potential to exploit trust position gives them?</b>	27% (196)	59% (429)	14% (102)
<b>Do you learn from interaction on Twitter between doctors when discussing public health and policy discussions?</b>	81.2% (590)	10.6% (77)	8.3% (60)
<b>Should doctors be allowed to have anonymous accounts when posting about healthcare?</b>	45.4% (330)	37.8% (275)	16.8% (122)
<b>It is helpful when doctors tweet about papers they have published?</b>	88% (640)	4.1% (30)	7.8% (57)
<b>Should doctors tweet about papers they have published?</b>	82.5% (600)	8.9% (65)	8.5% (62)



<b>Should doctors be able to post pictures of themselves on Twitter in a work-related capacity?</b>	74.7% (543)	13.3% (97)	12% (87)
<b>Has a doctor ever posted something on Twitter that has made you mistrust their profession?</b>	31.6 % (230)	57.2% (416)	11.1% (81)

**Table S8. Differences recorded between doctor's vs combined patients, lay person and other HCPS**

		<b>HCPs</b>	<b>Patients</b>	<b>P-value</b>
<b>Have you ever witnessed unprofessional behaviour from doctors on Twitter?</b>	Yes	61.9%(316)	34.2%(74)	<0.01
	No	24.5%(125)	53.7%(116)	
	Not sure	13.5%(69)	12%(27)	
<b>Have you ever witnessed an incident on Twitter where doctors could have potentially breached patient confidentiality?</b>	Yes	37.5%(179)	15.7%(34)	<0.01
	No	54.9%(262)	67.5%(147)	
	Not sure	7.5%(36)	16.6%(36)	
<b>Do you think Twitter should fact check the content posted by doctors?</b>	Yes	41.5%(212)	55%(119)	<0.01
	No	37%(189)	26%(56)	
	Not sure	21.4%(110)	19%(42)	
<b>Do you think doctors' regulators should monitor Twitter accounts in line with their role of conduct?</b>	Yes	88.5%(186)	52.7%(115)	<0.01
	No	48.6%(248)	28.7%(62)	
	Not sure	14.9%(76)	18.5%(40)	
<b>Do you think doctors' employers should monitor Twitter accounts?</b>	Yes	48.6%(248)	28.7%(62)	<0.01
	No	14.9%(76)	18.5%(40)	
	Not sure	17.3%(88)	28.7%(62)	
<b>Do you think it is acceptable for doctors to post or engage via</b>	Yes	17.3%(88)	28.7% (63)	0.1
	No	71%(363)	52.7%(114)	
	Not sure	11.6%(59)	18.5%(40)	

<b>Twitter regularly throughout the working day? (excluding conferences/events)</b>				
<b>Should doctors have separate Twitter accounts one for professional lives and the other for their lives outside of work?</b>	Yes	36%(184)	46.2%(100)	0.02
	No	44.5%(227)	34.7%(76)	
	Not sure	19.4%(99)	19%(41)	
<b>Do you think doctors should discuss challenges they may face at work on Twitter?</b>	Yes	76%(388)	71%(153)	0.32
	No	12.7%(65)	14.8%(32)	
	Not sure	11.1%(57)	14.4%(32)	
<b>Should doctors be allowed to post ads and monetise their Twitter account?</b>	Yes	32%(163)	25.5%(55)	0.21
	No	49.4%(252)	54.6%(119)	
	Not sure	18.6%(95)	19.9%(43)	
<b>Have you seen doctors on Twitter advertise services that could have potential to exploit trust position gives them?</b>	Yes	30%(153)	19.9%(43)	0.02
	No	56%(287)	66.2%(144)	
	Not sure	13.9%(71)	13.9%(30)	
<b>Do you learn from interaction on Twitter between doctors when discussing public health and policy discussions?</b>	Yes	85.3%(435)	71.8%(155)	<0.01
	No	8.8%(45)	14.8%(33)	
	Not sure	5.9%30	13.4%(29)	

<b>Should doctors be allowed to have anonymous accounts when posting about healthcare?</b>	Yes	49%(251)	36.6%(79)	<0.01
	No	35%(179)	44.4%(97)	
	Not sure	15.7%(81)	18.9%(41)	
<b>Should doctors tweet about papers they have published?</b>	Yes	88%(449)	88.4%(192)	<0.01
	No	5.4%(28)	0.9%(2)	
	Not sure	6.4%(34)	10.6%(23)	
<b>Should doctors offer medical advice on Twitter?</b>	Yes	4.5%(23)	19.4%(43)	<0.01
	No	90.4%(461)	64.4%(139)	
	Not sure	5%(26)	16.2%(35)	
<b>Should doctors be able to post pictures of themselves on Twitter in a work-related capacity</b>	Yes	74.7%(381)	75%(163)	0.18
	No	14.5%(74)	10.6%(23)	
	Not sure	10.8%(55)	14.4%(31)	