

Clinical images and the use of personal mobile devices

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James' interest in medical education, especially that of early career doctors, grew during his role as the Director of Prevocational Education and Training at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital, Sydney, from 2008 to 2014. This led to his current role as the NSW Prevocational Training Council Chair at the Health and Education and Training Institute (HETI). James works clinically as an Emergency Physician at Royal Prince Alfred Hospital and is Director of the Department. The need to better prepare students for their first years of practice led James to take on the role of the Chair of the Sydney University Pre-internship (PRINT) block in 2012. James has a Masters in Medical Education from the University of Sydney. When not being a husband, father to two beautiful girls, juggling his multiple roles he loves to watch the Adelaide Crows (AFL) win and play tennis.

Dr James Edwards' blog on a new guide for medical students and doctors by [AMA](#) and [MIIAA](#) focusing on the use of mobile devices in a clinical setting.

You are on the wards on a weekend shift and you are asked by the nursing staff to review a 45-year-old female following recent mastectomy and immediate breast reconstruction surgery as they are concerned about the wound. You examine the wound and describe your findings to the on-call surgical registrar. They are not in the hospital so they ask you to take a photo of the breast on your mobile phone and text it to them. You are somewhat hesitant as the patient is a well-known television host. You are reassured by the registrar that clinical photos are taken all the time and he will delete the photo later.

Whilst walking towards the patient, a number of questions go through your mind...

- **Do I need to consent the patient?**
- **Is verbal consent adequate?**
- **Is it appropriate to use my personal mobile device?**
- **Am I at fault if the registrar posts the photo on social media?**
- **Could someone work out who the patient is despite my efforts at removing patient identifiers?**

The Australian Medical Association (AMA) and the Medical Indemnity Industry Association of Australia (MIIAA) have produced a guide for the proper use of personal mobile devices when taking clinical images. The guide outlines the key ethical and legal issues to be aware of before using a personal mobile device to take or transmit clinical images for the purpose of providing clinical care.

Clinical images and the use of personal mobile devices: A guide for medical students and doctors

[Link to Guide](#)

This is a valuable guide for all hospital doctors.

However, it should be read with any relevant hospital policies related to clinical images and the use of personal mobile devices.

Tags: #clinical images,#consent,#ethics,#legal,#medicolegal,#Mobile phone,#patient safety,#personal mobile devices,#photography,#photos