# Social Media’s Influence in Healthcare

The rise in technology has seen many economic sectors grow in a number of ways including production growth and enhancement in the profit-making institution. This has seen the internet providing the best communication channel which has consequently made the world a global village (Dean, 2017). Nevertheless, the rise and growth of the internet in social media (including Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and WeChat among others) have raised the question of personal information integrity when it comes to sensitive information of individuals. This demise has mainly faced the healthcare sectors where patient data is now seemingly unprotected with reference to the following scenarios.

## Scenario Number 1

Apparently, a nurse misses a concert because the event coincides with her shift which starts from 7 pm to 7 pm. This nurse has a friend who really wanted that she attends the event as it was going to be a lot of fun. The nurse’s professional commitment denies her that chance. Unfortunately, later in the night, a casualty by the name Jerod is admitted after being involved in an accident. The nurse manages to recognize that Jerod was the main entertainer in the concert she missed. The nurse is so excited about the entire situation that she begins to take photos of the unconscious patient and now believes that she even manages to get the patient’s number who Jerod the celebrity. The following day, the nurse posts the pictures of the patient in Facebook and Instagram believing that sine it is his day off, no one will bother that much in recognizing that Jerod was actually in the hospital. She is so joyful of the situation that she even brags that it was much better for her not to attend the event because she met the leader of the band in person.

## Scenario Number 2

The same situation takes a new shift in direction as the hospital the nurse works for is being sued in violation of the HIPAA violation. It now seems that the cell phone which took the photos had been stolen from the nurse by her best friend. The friend decides to cash in on the photos by selling them to the Gossip Gazette, a local daily. Now the entire hospital is in shambles as the police are now conducting a strict investigation after the photos were leaked to the public. Upon getting the news, the nurse quickly searches her phone but, unfortunately, the phone is nowhere to be found.

## The HIPAA Regulation

From a descriptive point of view, the Health Insurance Portability and Accountability Act happens to be a US law whose main purpose is to protect patient’s data as part of hospital records. The privacy standards to be implemented are left to the discretion of the hospital for as long as the records of patients are kept private (Agris & Spandorfer, 2016). The individuals who are expected to abide by this regulation strictly are health officers who are directly into contact with patients. These would include nurses, doctors, pharmacists as well as other clinical officers who tend to be involved in the treatment progress of the patient.

With respect to the above regulation, the nurse was the main suspect in violating the HIPAA regulation according to the described enactment. In this context, the use of social media was misused, and hence the hospital was considered accountable for leaking the patient’s photos into the public while he was unconscious. From a keen point of view, the investigation would be very clear on the interpretation of the act in the sense that even photos or images of a patient while under the hospital care form part of his/her records and hence should be protected.

## Social Media Influence in this Scenario

The use of, according to research, social media is growing on a daily basis and affecting children as young as eight years after birth. From one end, social media has been very influential when it comes to its communication prowess as depicted in the first scenario. The nurse got a message from her friend that she was missing one of the best nights out with her friends over the internet through social media. She was not able to attend the concert due to her professional commitment and communicated the same to her friends through the same platform.

From the above-described argument, it would be very genuine to note that social media has come with a number of benefits. In the past, the technology could not allow individuals to communicate information in that kind of lightening-speed manner (Carlson, et.al, 2016). Secondly, enhance communication elements engulfed in message expression using images and photos had not grown to such extents. It is for this reason that today’s growth in technology people are now able to communicate fast and this has been mainly beneficial among businesses which use social media as a tool for marketing.

Dwelling on the same uses of social media as part of growth and development in technology, it would be equitably vital to acknowledge that social media has resulted in a number of disadvantages. To be more specific, social media has been used for sending the wrong message to the public in a number of occasions. For instance, the nurse used Facebook and Instagram to circulate Jerod’s photos during her day off time thinking that it would not raise the alarm as she was not officially at work. When critically addressed, social media in itself happens to be a very inventive and innovative technology. However, its use by the public is the main bone of contention that has seen many violations reported including the HIPAA.

## Conclusion

It would be very painful for Jerod to have woken up in a court-like environment where his photos were forming part of an investigation. It is very true that his celebrity status would not allow him to get furious with the nurse, but he might feel that his personal information is unsecure within the healthcare system of that particular hospital. From another angle, it was very naïve and shameful for the nurse to have taken photos of an unconscious patient simply because she wanted to prove the point that she got the better of the night than her friends. In essence, this would be very inappropriate and unethical for such a profession leaving aside the HIPAA regulation which is now taking action against the hospital.

## Recommendations

Each and every profession that involves itself with the public should now have its curriculum touching on personal data privacy of clients or customers. Making this a career requirement (particularly in the use of social media) would see to it that protection of personal information by an organization is guaranteed to avoid scenarios such as that one witnessed in the hospital environment. From another angle, more acts revolving around the use of social media should be enacted to protect individuals’ personal data where it seems to be wrongly used.

## References

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