

AAMSSA Guideline – Safe Practices on Social Media Updated 2024

Update on Ethical Guidelines Social Media

The Aesthetic and Anti-Aging Medicine Society of South Africa (AAMSSA) supports the key objectives of the HPCSA to guide the profession and protect the public. We kindly request that our members familiarise themselves with the HPCSA Ethical Guidelines on Social Media Booklet 16.

To uphold the science, standards and credibility of Aesthetic Medicine in South Africa we ask that aesthetic practitioners use social media positively and constructively, but respecting the HPCSA guidelines.

[Click Here to Access HPCSA Professional Practice Ethical Guidelines for Good Practice:](#) Select Ethics, navigate to Booklet 16: Ethical Guidelines on Social Media – View Document

[Click Here to Access Legislation and Health Professions Acts](#)

What constitutes social media?

Social media includes social networks (e.g. Facebook, Twitter, WhatsApp, Tik Tok, Snapchat, WeChat LinkedIn etc.), content-sharing platforms (e.g. YouTube and Instagram), personal and professional blogs (including email, SMS, electronic, as well as those published anonymously), internet discussion forums, and the comments of websites.

Canvassing & Touting

“A practitioner should not promote their professional goods and services by drawing attention to their personal qualities, superior knowledge, and quality of service, professional guarantees or best practice” (HPCSA Ethical Booklets 2 & 16) e.g. “You can rest assured that you’ll be in excellent hands” , “ Top skin lightening specialist”

Touting involves drawing attention to one’s professional goods or services by offering guarantees or benefits that fall outside one’s scope of practice. (HPCSA Ethical Booklet 16) . Examples include advertising free services to patients while waiting for their consultations (like free Wi-Fi) or offering champagne before, during or after a treatment.

Criticising colleagues work on social media

“Health practitioners must not post their opinions on the probity, skill or professional reputation of their colleagues on social media, lest the public lose faith in the health care profession.” (HPCSA Ethical Booklet 16)

There is an unfortunate trend in the Aesthetics industry where a doctor casts negative aspersions on a colleague by posting photographs of apparent “botched” treatments, followed by their reversal and subsequent correction. This practice is unethical and does not promote confidence or trust in the industry.

Posting opinions of colleagues and criticising their work on social media even without any mention of names, can be very damaging to a doctor’s reputation.

If you are regularly seeing complications from a colleague, the correct course of action is to communicate with the colleague privately. It is important that the doctor is made aware of the complication or unsatisfactory outcome and is given the opportunity to manage it. AAMSSA does not condone professional bullying in any form.

WhatsApp Chat Groups

“Health practitioners may engage fully in debates on health matters, however they must be aware that the laws regarding libel, defamation, hate speech and copyright also extend to content shared via social media”. (HPCSA Ethical Booklet 16). As professionals we should remain polite and respectful in discussion groups, valuing different opinions and avoiding personal comments.

Clinical Advice on Social Media

If a patient seeks health care advice over social media, the health care practitioner should request that they set up an appointment in-person. Advice cannot be given without prior consent, consultation, or background knowledge. Always ensure a first consultation with the patient in person. Once this is done electronic platforms can be used to the extent that the patient’s condition is manageable. During Covid-19 Pandemic telemedicine is allowed but this would be in the form of a formal structured consultation on a private platform.

Professional Boundaries

Health practitioners should separate their professional and personal social media accounts to help maintain the appropriate professional boundaries.

Patient Confidentiality

Always protect patient confidentiality. Any person convicted of an offence in terms of POPI Act is liable to a fine and/or imprisonment of up to ten years. All patient photographs published on social media require informed written consent. If possible remove any identifying features.

“Botox” Parties

Refrain from the practice or advertisement of Botox Parties as this puts the industry in total disrepute.

e.g. “Botox and Bubbles”; “Get your Botox Fix whilst enjoying a drink and good company”.

Advertising alcohol together with Schedule 4 drugs such as botulinum toxin is unprofessional, unsafe, unethical and is also a form of touting, which is against the HPCSA ethical rules (Booklets 2 & 16).

Price Lists

Do not upload or distribute price lists on any social media platforms. This includes websites, group email distribution and group WhatsApp messages. Prices may be sent to a patient on request.

It is against HPCSA regulations to list prices of medications above schedule 2 as well as all injectables (Class C and D Medical Devices).

Specials & Discounts

Anything that is administered by a medical doctor may not be advertised at a special price or discounted rate. E.g. “Buy one, get one free” , “BTX specials”

However, therapists may advertise their own specials.

IV Nutrient Therapy

Most ingredients used in IV Infusions are classified as schedule 2 to 4 medicines and so may not be advertised, or offered on specials.

Patented Procedures

To protect yourself from possible litigation, refrain from using patented names on social media e.g. “O shot” or “Vampire facial” as these are registered Trade Marked procedures.

Evidence Based Medicine

Aesthetic Medicine is not a pseudo-science! Keep advice and information factual and based on scientific evidence in communicating developments and new technologies on social media.

Advertising: Scheduled Medicines & Trade Names

Schedule 2 and above Medicines may not be advertised to the public.

Prices of Schedule 2 and above Medications may not be listed on social media.

Trade names may not be mentioned on social media. e.g. Juvéderm®, Profhilo®.

Use generic terms such as dermal filler or bioremodeller.

Product	Acceptable name for social media	Don't use
Botox, Dysport	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Botulinum Toxin, neurotoxin - Wrinkle relaxing injection 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trade name - B-tox, B*tox, Btx, Beautox
HA dermal fillers such as Restylane, Juvéderm, Belotero, Saypha, Teoxane	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Dermal filler - Hyaluronic acid filler 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trade name
Non-HA dermal fillers such as Radiesse, Ellanse and Sculptra	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Non-hyaluronic acid filler - Biostimulator - Biorevitaliser - Bioremodeller - Polydioxanone - Polylactic acid - Calcium hydroxyapatite 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trade name
Non-crosslinked HA injectables such as Profhilo, Filorga NCTF HA, Teoxane, Restylane Vital, Vital Lite, Redensity 1, Hyalual	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Skin booster - Tissue booster - Bioremodeller - Biohydrator - Biostimulator - Hyaluronic acid - Redermalisation 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trade name
Hybrid dermal fillers such as HarmonyCa	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Hybrid dermal filler - Hyaluronic acid - Calcium hydroxyapatite 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trade name
Threads	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Threads - Sutures - Polylactic acid - Polydioxanone - Thread lift 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Trade name
Biostimulators	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - High/Low molecular weight HA - Polynucleotides - PLLA - Calcium Hydroxyapatite 	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> - Profhilo, - Nucleofill - Sculptra Radiesse

Advertising Medical Devices and the Medical Device Regulations

The new Medical Device Regulations Act states that Class C and D Medical Devices may not be advertised to the public.

Class D Devices include all injectables! Therefore, injectables such as Botox®, Dysport®, Restylane®, Juvéderm®, Radiesse®, Ellansé®, Silhouette Soft®, Aptos®, Hyalual® XelaRederm® etc. are not to be advertised or mentioned by trade name on social media.

Only Class A and Class B Medical Devices and IVDs (In vitro devices) may be advertised to the public.

Class A	Low risk	e.g. skin analysers , microscopes
Class B	Low to moderate risk	e.g. needles, electrical/thermal/cryo/mechanical or light energy-based devices
Class C	Moderate to high risk	e.g. Ultrasound and Lasers
Class D	High Risk	e.g. Threads, dermal fillers, injectable medicines, and implants

Advertising from non-medical premises

AAMSSA does not encourage the practice, promotion, or advertising of Aesthetic Medicine from non-clinical premises such as beauty salons, hair salons and spa's.

Testimonials

Please note that posting patients testimonials on social media is a form of canvassing if it draws attention to a doctor's superior qualities.

Before & After Photos

Keep before and after photos educational and informative. They should not be used to draw attention to your superior knowledge, technique, or personal qualities.

Disclaimers & Declaring Interest

"Health practitioners are advised to include disclaimers in their social media profiles, indicating that the views expressed therein are their own and not those of the health profession or the health establishment they represent" (HPCSA Ethical Booklet 16)

It is advisable to add a disclaimer on all social media related platforms regarding education, advice given and the need for a consultation.

Doctors who post material online are obliged to declare any financial or commercial interest in healthcare organisations or pharmaceutical and biomedical companies.

Cyber Fraud

There have been incidents of cyber fraud in SA where fake Instagram accounts were made of an aesthetic doctor. Followers deposited significant amounts of money into a fraudulent account to book treatments. Should you feel at risk please add a disclaimer on your social media platform stating that you will never ask for payment before a consultation or treatment.

When posting anything on social media remember the wise words of Warren Buffet:

"It takes 20 years to build a reputation and five minutes to ruin it. If you think about that, you'll do things differently".

The Executive Committee members as health care practitioners registered with the HPCSA, have an obligation to report any unprofessional, illegal, or unethical conduct to the HPCSA.

Thank you for your consideration in this important matter.

Social media related queries can be directed to the AAMSSA office: info@aestheticdoctors.co.za

References & Relevant Links

- a) [Click to Access HPCSA Guidelines Professional Practice](#): Select Ethics Booklets 1-17, navigate to Booklet 16: Ethical Guidelines on Social Media – View Document
- b) [Click to Access Legislation and Health Professions Acts](#)
- c) [Click for more information on Minimum Requirements for Health Product Advertising](#)
- d) [Click to Access SAHPRA General Guideline Medical Device IVD Act](#)
- e) [Click to Access Exemptions of Medical Devices and IVDS from provisions of sections 18A and 18B of the Act](#)
- f) [Click and get online Ethics CPD points for Social Media Communication between doctor and patient](#)