



SASA
SOUTH AFRICAN SOCIETY OF ANAESTHESIOLOGISTS

Social Media Policy and Online Events Code of Conduct

2021

SASA Social Media Policy and Online Events Code of Conduct:

Introduction:

As healthcare workers, SASA members have a duty to adhere to strict codes of conduct on all public forums, and in all aspects of their personal and professional life.

Social media Includes all forms of instant messaging, social networks, content-sharing platforms, personal and professional blogs, internet discussion forums, comment sections of websites and virtual discussion platforms. Content that is included in this definition may encompass opinions, written information, data, photos, videos and audio media. This definition therefore includes all of the platforms on which SASA currently electronically communicates.

In South Africa, all clinicians are guided and regulated by the HPCSA and the Ethical Rules Booklets as published by the Council. Booklet 16 outlines the Ethical Guidelines for Social Media. In addition to this, our members are guided by and expected to adhere to:

- SASA Member Code of Conduct for Anaesthesia Professionals,
- SASA Transformation and Diversity Policy, and
- SASA Anti-racism and Discrimination Policy.

The purpose of this policy is to provide a set of additional principles and guidelines to SASA members, incorporating all the tenets of the above-mentioned Policies, Guidelines and Codes of Conduct, specifically with regards to their use of social media, instant messaging and their participation and interaction in online events/webinars.

SASA Members Online Social Media Activities:

SASA recognises and supports the rights of members to engage on social media platforms in their professional capacity as well as personal capacity as a form of discussion, networking, information sharing, education and self-expression. It is, however vitally important that members are aware of the implications and potential consequences of engaging with others on such platforms and the impact that it may have on their own brand as a healthcare worker, as well as the brand of the Profession and the Society. Unfortunately, healthcare workers may be held professionally accountable and responsible for their actions, comments and interactions in their personal life and on personal platforms and accounts, as these all lie within the public domain. The potentially harmful and negative impact of this is far reaching and has the ability to harm healthcare workers in their professional capacity, the Society as the collective, the Profession of which they are nationally and globally representative and, ultimately, even patients and their current and future interactions with them.

To this end, members are encouraged to remember the following:

1. **Adhere to all Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) rules and regulations** regarding good professional conduct and ethical practice, as stipulated in the online Booklets, specifically Booklet 16 which refers to social media usage.
2. **Abide by the SASA Member Code of Conduct for Anaesthesia Professionals.**

3. **Abide by the SASA Transformation and Diversity Policy:** SASA will not accept any form of discrimination, whether overt, covert, or systemic, in regard to race, gender, sex, ethnic or social origin, colour, sexual orientation, culture, religion, language, national origin, disability status, socio-economic status, age, and ideology.
4. **Be conscious of the often indistinct line between personal and professional identity in the virtual space:** Online, personal and business personas are likely to intersect. SASA respects the rights to free speech of all of its members, but it is essential to note that once content is shared, it may be viewed, shared and distributed by anyone who has access to it directly or through shared networks. The risk of comments or attached media being taken out of context, abridged or misquoted and misrepresented is significant. For this reason, extreme caution should be exercised when engaging, commenting or posting in the virtual space. The right to free speech should not infringe on the rights of others to dignity and respect.
5. **Remember to check privacy settings on social media platforms:** Ensure that viewing personal posts is limited to only those who are known contacts. It is also advisable to keep primary email and contact numbers private. Members should avoid using public storages for private information, and consider using short messaging apps with end-to-end encryption.
6. **Password protection and regular review and changing of passwords is mandatory for all platforms where applicable,** as is reviewing permissions for mobile apps, cross-platform data sharing and browser extensions.
7. **The internet is forever:** Once content is shared, it cannot ever be permanently removed. Ensure that this is taken into account when posting, commenting or sharing information and digital media.
8. **Healthcare workers are held to a higher level of accountability** and professionalism by the greater society and as such, posts should always demonstrate the levels of integrity demanded of the Profession and the Society, be evidence-based, be responsible, be ethical and be respectful of other parties and those being engaged with.
9. **Be accountable and responsible** as anything posted that can potentially tarnish the Profession's image or the member's own personal/professional brand will ultimately be their responsibility and they will be held accountable in their personal capacity.
10. **When in doubt, do not post.** If members are uncertain of the intended impact of the post, or the potential risk to themselves, their brand, the Profession, the Society or their patients; members are encouraged not to share the content. Members should avoid emotional, unobjective or confrontational posts and engagements at all times. The virtual space is particularly poorly suited for conflict resolution and outcomes are rarely positive in this regard, often bearing significantly negative and unintended consequences.

Online Events, Meetings and Webinars

As we move more definitively and widely into the virtual and hybrid event space, there are some important factors to consider when attending and utilising the platforms for such meetings, events and webinars.

Conduct and professionalism at a virtual event demands the same levels of professionalism, and respect towards fellow delegates, organisers and staff as would be expected at a face-to-face event.



1. All conference participants (sponsors, staff, volunteers, speakers, attendees, and other guests) are expected to abide by the above mentioned SASA and HPCSA Policies and Codes of Conduct at all conference platforms and conference-related social events. This policy must be supplied or made available to all who attend or participate so as to ensure that expected conduct for the event is clearly outlined.
2. It is also important to ensure that all material used for the purposes of the event must be respectful of the subjects and audience, be used with appropriate consent and referencing and adhere to ethical guidelines already well established for any research or teaching.

Consequences of unprofessional, discriminatory, offensive or abusive behaviour on social media platforms or at events

1. Unacceptable behaviour (as outlined above) will not be accepted by SASA.
2. Anyone who has been identified to be behaving in such a way as to infringe upon the above-mentioned Guidelines, Code of Conduct or Policies will be requested to refrain from such behaviour and is expected to comply with immediate effect.
3. Should a complaint be received by the SASA CEO or Council relating to a member's social media platforms, the SASA Council and Exco will review the posts or reported behaviour and may engage with the member for comment in order to remedy the concerns raised.
4. Should the identified and noted practice continue, SASA Council and Exco is mandated by both the HPCSA and our own Policies and Guidelines to then further escalate remedial action, which may ultimately result in both HPCSA reporting of the member and SASA membership suspension.
5. In the case of a virtual event, conduct that is found to be persistently in violation of the above-mentioned Policies and Guidelines may result in engagement with the member or delegate in question by the SASA event organising committee Chair, CEO or SASA Exco member. Should the identified and noted behaviour persist, SASA reserves the right to remove the virtual access of the member or delegate to the event and escalate remedial actions and further engagement as per SASA's Policies and Code of Conduct, and where deemed necessary by the SASA Exco and Council.
6. All complaints relating to this Policy will be investigated with report provided to SASA Council by the Regulation Business Unit.

What to do if a member witnesses or is subject to discriminatory, offensive or disrespectful behaviour during a virtual event:

If a member is subjected to such behaviour, notices that someone else is being subjected to such behaviour, or has any other related concerns concerning delegate behaviour or virtual content, they are encouraged to respectfully, and through confidential channels, inform the person engaging in such behaviour that they find such comments offensive or unprofessional. The person may not be aware that their comments are perceived in this manner, and raising awareness through respectful communication is key. Should this direct approach not be successful or if direct engagement is not possible for any reason, the member is encouraged to notify the event organizer or SASA CEO as soon as possible.