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## ASSESSMENT OF MEDICAL STUDENTS ATTITUDES TOWARDS E-PROFESSIONALISM AND USAGE OF FACEBOOK IN A DEVELOPING COUNTRY IN SOUTH ASIA

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### Aims

Social networking sites are a popular means of communication among youth. Among them facebook(FB) is the most popular site. Studies have shown that many medical students share their professional experiences through FB without altering default private settings, leaving them accessible to public. E-professionalism refers to "the attitudes and behaviours reflecting traditional professionalism paradigms that are manifested through social media". It has been shown that medical students are struggling to negotiate their personal and professional identities and accountability on social media and their awareness on importance of e-professionalism is poor. In Sri Lanka, though social media usage is high, data among medical students on this aspect is scarce.

### Methods

Medical students from the fourth and final year batches(clinical stream) from the University of Sri Jayawardenepura were selected. A modified version of a self-administered questionnaire used in a UK study was applied after pre-tested among Sri Lankan students. It included questions on demographics, attitudes towards FB and e-professionalism. Results were analysed using SPSS.

### Results

A total of 266(94.5% response rate) students of clinical stream (fourth, fifth years) completed the questionnaire. The majority were females (70.1%). Mean age was 24.24 years (range 22-27). All students had a FB account and 74% logged daily. 74% strongly disagreed or disagreed that doctors and medical students should not register on FB. Majority (91%) were aware about the private setting of FB, but 82% were not agreed that their profile access should be limited only to their FB friends. Half of the students (52%) did not believe that access to personal information has an influence on doctor patient relationship. About two third of the students (61%) were not aware about the concept of e-professionalism and only 58% aware about the Sri Lanka Medical Council guidance of professional behaviour. However, 74.5% strongly agreed or agreed that they understand what the medical faculty would classify as unacceptable behaviour. When the two batches were considered, individually, a greater percentage of final year students than the fourth years, believed that doctor patient relationship changes when the patient can access to personal information (58% and 40% respectively). There was no change of responses between males and females seen.

### Conclusion

Even though the FB usage is 100% in the study population, it's relevance to professional behaviour was not well understood. The concept of e-professionalism was not well established among our students, compared to the findings of developed world. Formal integration of the concept of e-professionalism in to medical curricula should be considered as, it has been shown that the activities on social media have an impact on their professional reputation and identity.