

The Aesthetic Society Social Media Policy

Background The Aesthetic Society recognizes the powerful role that social media plays in patient education, marketing, branding, networking, and shaping public perception of aesthetic medicine.

“Social Media” refers to websites and applications that facilitate communication, digital media sharing, and interaction between individuals or organizations.

Consistent with the Aesthetic Society Code of Ethics and Bylaws, the Board of Directors of The Aesthetic Society and The Aesthetic Foundation establish the following guidelines for social media use by their members.

Patient Privacy and Safety

- A member must respect each patient’s right to medical and personal privacy. (Code of Ethics Section 1.05A)
- Informed consent is required for any use of patient-related content on social media, websites, or other digital platforms. Tagging a surgeon in a post or direct message does **not** constitute informed consent.
- Consent forms must be clear and specific about the purpose, platform(s), and limitations of media use. (Code of Ethics Section 1.03B)
- All HIPAA regulations apply to social media use. Consent must be limited to clearly defined uses.
- When possible, identifiable features (e.g., tattoos or birthmarks) should be obscured to protect identity.
- Patients may revoke consent at any time. Upon notification, members must make reasonable efforts to promptly remove the associated content.
- Patient participation in social media must be voluntary and must not impact their access to care or treatment.
- Acquiring content for social media must never place the patient, staff, or surgeon at risk.
- Members must document and store all patient consents in the patient record.
- A re-consent process should be established for long-term or reused content, especially if platform or usage changes.

Content Standards and Professionalism

- Professional accounts should be kept current with accurate information about the member and their practice.

- Members are responsible for all content they post or commission others to post. (Code of Ethics Section 3.02)
- Members must approve all advertisements before publishing and maintain a copy of each for at least one year.
- Hate speech or discriminatory content is prohibited.
- Posts should not exploit patient fears, anxieties, or emotional vulnerabilities. (Code of Ethics Section 3.01B.16)
- All content must be truthful, non-deceptive, and aligned with the Aesthetic Society Code of Ethics.
- Personal and professional accounts should be clearly distinguished to avoid confusion.
- Members should disclose any paid partnerships, sponsorships, or financial interests in content.
- Content must not guarantee outcomes or imply results that cannot be reasonably achieved.
- Content should not depict surgical procedures in a gratuitous, sensational, or voyeuristic manner.
- Posting during surgery should be avoided unless it does not compromise sterility, safety, or focus on patient care.
- Comments or messages on social platforms should be monitored regularly. Inappropriate content should be promptly moderated or reported.

Unethical Publishing Practices (Code of Ethics Section 3.01B) Examples include but are not limited to:

1. Advertising incomplete or misleading pricing
2. Misrepresenting before-and-after results through manipulation or false context
3. Using patient photos or procedures not performed by the member without consent
4. Publishing research or media without proper rights or attribution
5. Using unauthorized or unethical digital marketing techniques (e.g., black hat SEO)
6. Practicing under misleading trade names or marketing unverifiable claims
7. Highlighting atypical results without disclosure
8. Creating fake reviews, testimonials, or using models without disclosure
9. Making unsubstantiated claims of superiority or unique efficacy
10. Omitting disclosures on paid or sponsored content
11. Misusing organizational logos to suggest membership status

Members are accountable for any violation of this policy by their staff or contracted third parties and may be subject to disciplinary action for non-compliance.

Conclusion This policy is intended to uphold professionalism, transparency, and patient trust while ensuring compliance with ethical and legal standards. Members are encouraged to review these guidelines regularly and consult with the Society for clarification if needed.

Members should also stay current with evolving social media trends, legal obligations, and best practices in digital communication, as part of their commitment to ethical and responsible engagement online.

Approved by The Aesthetic Society Board of Directors – August 22, 2025