

PATIENT CONFIDENTIALITY

At First Year Orientation each of you signed a **Confidentiality Agreement**, which said in part:

"I agree that I will not read or otherwise access Confidential Information except as required to perform my duties and responsibilities at TTUHSC. Further, unless disclosure is authorized or required by law, I agree that I will not disclose Confidential Information now, or at any time in the future, either directly or indirectly, except as required to perform my duties and responsibilities at TTUHSC and then only to the extent disclosure is consistent with the authorized purpose for which the information was obtained.

I agree to handle all Confidential Information, whether written, electronic, oral or in some other form, in such a way that it shall not be inadvertently revealed or disclosed to an unauthorized person. Except as authorized by my responsibilities and duties, I will not maintain for my files any permanent record that contains Confidential Information and I will destroy any drafts or unofficial copies of Confidential Information.

I acknowledge and agree that any breach of this Confidentiality Agreement by me may result in disciplinary action which may include immediate termination of my employment or affiliation with TTUHSC; further, I understand that such a breach may result in legal action.

The terms of this Confidentiality Agreement are effective immediately and apply to all Confidential Information I have attained in the past as well as future Confidential Information. I understand that this document will become a part of my permanent employment, volunteer, and/or student record. "

As Facebook and other forms of social media become more and more popular, medical students have yet another arena in which they need to police themselves. An article in the *Journal of the American Medical Association* reported that the majority of medical schools have had incidents in which medical students breached patient confidentiality and other aspects of professionalism by material they posted on social media websites. Several of these incidents have resulted in students' dismissal from medical school.

The take home lesson:

BE CAREFUL!! THINK before you talk about patients in the cafeteria or the elevators; make sure you haven't left printed materials with patient information lying about in classrooms, etc.; **DO NOT** post details of any kind on Facebook, etc. about your patients. **One careless mistake can cost the institution millions of dollars and it can cost you your career.**