

Social Media and Advertising Ethics for Indonesian Physicians

Background:

The rapid evolution of digital platforms and social media offers unprecedented opportunities for healthcare professionals to enhance medical education, foster peer networking, and facilitate health promotion. However, within highly visual and market-driven specialties such as aesthetic and reconstructive surgery, social media engagement presents complex ethical dilemmas. Issues frequently arise concerning patient privacy violations, unauthorized dissemination of clinical and surgical imagery, blurred doctor-patient boundaries, consumerist marketing disguised as scientific discourse, and unprofessional online conduct.

Ethical & Legal Framework:

In Indonesia, digital conduct is governed legally by the Electronic Information and Transactions (ITE) Law (Law No. 11/2008 & Law No. 19/2016) and strictly guided by the Indonesian Medical Code of Ethics (*Kode Etik Kedokteran Indonesia* / KODEKI 2012). Specifically, Article 3 emphasizes maintaining professional autonomy against commercial interests, while Article 4 strictly forbids self-praise, superlative claims, and the misuse of patient testimonials. Furthermore, the Indonesian Medical Association's Medical Ethics Honor Board (MKEK PB IDI) Decree No. 029/PB/K.MKEK/04/2021 provides dedicated ethical fatwas on social media usage, patient consent, pre- and post-operative multimedia dissemination, live streaming, and physician-led commercial endorsements.

Discussion & Practical Guidance:

While physicians are encouraged to disseminate factual health literacy and counter medical misinformation, they must maintain absolute confidentiality, obtain robust explicit informed consent prior to publishing any clinical material, and ensure that commercial endorsements with health or beauty claims do not compromise the dignity and altruistic nature of the medical profession. Legitimate promotion remains restricted to factual practice announcements or hospital/clinic-based institutional communications in alignment with applicable health regulations.

Conclusion:

Physicians must harmonize digital innovation with ethical boundaries. By upholding standard bioethical principles, respecting patient autonomy and privacy, and adhering to MKEK guidelines, physicians can leverage social media responsibly to foster public trust while safeguarding professional integrity.

Keywords: Social media ethics, Medical ethics, KODEKI, MKEK IDI, Physician advertising, Confidentiality, Aesthetic surgery.