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Exploring the Ethical Dimensions: Clinical-Year Dental Students' Perceptions of Sharing Clinical Cases on Social Media at a Private Dental School in Northern Malaysia

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Abstract

The ethical implications of sharing clinical cases on social media have become increasingly important in dentistry. This study aimed to explore the perceptions of clinical-year dental students (defined as those in Years 3 to 5 who are actively engaged in clinical patient care) regarding ethical considerations in this context. A cross-sectional survey was conducted among clinical-year dental students at a private dental school in Northern Malaysia, using a validated online questionnaire comprising 14 closed-ended items across two domains and two open-ended questions. Quantitative data were analysed using one-way ANOVA and independent t tests, while qualitative responses underwent content analysis. A total of 173 students participated (response rate: 80.5%), with a mean age of 23.0 years (± 1.08); most respondents were female and of Chinese ethnicity. Participants demonstrated generally positive perceptions across both domains. Female students scored

significantly higher than males in Domain 1 ($P = 0.027$). Qualitative findings revealed that students prioritised patient privacy and confidentiality when sharing clinical cases online, yet also recognised the potential benefits of social media for professional networking and knowledge exchange. Overall, undergraduate clinical-year dental students expressed positive perceptions of the ethical considerations involved in sharing clinical cases on social media. Given the growing role of digital platforms in healthcare, there is an urgent need to strengthen awareness and guidelines to ensure that ethical principles and patient-centred care remain central to clinical case sharing practices. © 2026, Chiang Mai University. All rights reserved.

Author keywords

Clinical cases; Confidentiality; Dental ethics; Dental students; Social media

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