

## Case Study: Protecting the Patient

### *A radiology department takes deliberate measures to protect patient privacy on social media.*

By Jenny Jones

When the radiology department at Cincinnati Children's Hospital Medical Center began sharing cases on the image-sharing website Instagram, and later Figure 1 (a site exclusively for sharing medical images), the team's primary concern was protecting patient privacy.

To ensure no identifiable patient information appeared on the sites, Alex J. Towbin, MD, associate chief of clinical operations and radiology informatics and head of social media outreach within the radiology department, instructed his team to use the screen capture application in the department's PACS to acquire the images without the associated demographic information.

*Learn more about the department's social media outreach initiative.*

Towbin and Saad Ranginwala, MD, a radiology resident who helps manage the department's Instagram and Figure 1 accounts, also made it a policy to refrain from sharing high-profile cases that could potentially be traced back to the patient.

"We do everything we can to protect patient privacy," says Towbin, who is also the Neil D. Johnson Chair of Radiology Informatics. "We don't give complete patient histories or ages, and we avoid providing specific information about patient outcomes. Instead we focus on the disease or disease process."

Towbin and Ranginwala shared their Instagram plan with the hospital's legal department, which gave its approval. In particular, the legal department agreed that as long as the radiologists redacted all identifying patient information, they did not need to obtain patient consent to post cases on Instagram, Towbin says.

"The rationale was that sharing cases on Instagram was similar to a case report or educational poster at a meeting like RSNA or even a book chapter, where we include information and have images but do not identify patients," he explains. "Really, the only difference is the audience and the method of sharing."

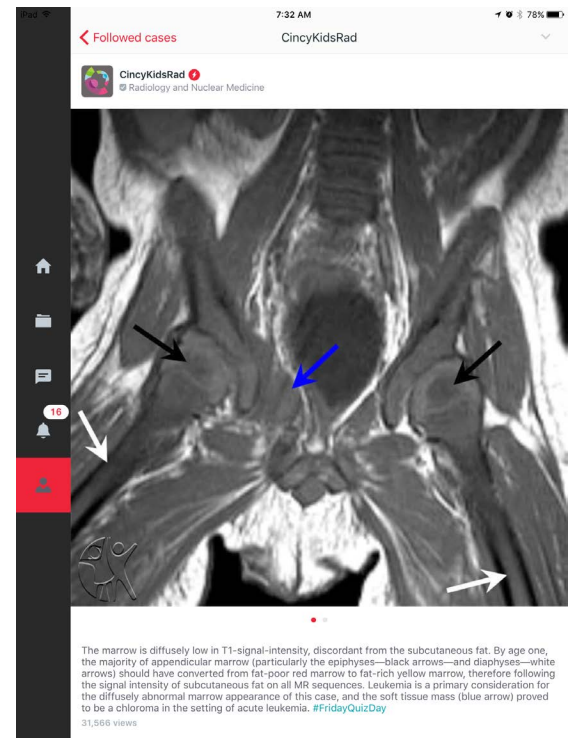
### Read More about Cincinnati Children's

- In *Socially Connected*, learn how the hospital's radiology department embarked on a social media outreach initiative.

ACR  
1891 Preston White Drive  
Reston, VA 20191  
703-648-8900  
[www.acr.org/Imaging3](http://www.acr.org/Imaging3)

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Media contact: [pr@acr.org](mailto:pr@acr.org)



When sharing cases on Instagram and Figure 1, the radiologists at Cincinnati Children's Hospital remove all identifying patient information.

- In *Blog About It*, learn how the department maintains a patient-facing blog.

### Join the Discussion

Want to join the discussion about how radiologists can protect patient privacy on social media? Let us know your thoughts on Twitter at #imaging3.

Have a case study idea you'd like to share with the radiology community? Please submit your idea to <http://bit.ly/CaseStudyForm>.



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