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TITLE: CONSIDERATIONS FOR SOCIAL NETWORK SITE (SNS) USE IN EDUCATION

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Abstract:

Social Networking Sites (SNSs) such as Facebook, Google+, Myspace, LinkedIn and Twitter have become commonplace in international virtual space. Approximately 75% of all online adults maintain at least one social network profile. As SNSs are becoming more ubiquitous, they are also becoming more sophisticated and many operate on a free service model based on advertising revenues. Free services are obviously attractive to educational institutions in the developing world with small education budgets. With the exception of sites such as Edmodo, SNSs, however, are generally commercially driven and educational goals and purposes were not part of their original design. Educational uses have generally been the result of the creative adaptation of SNSs by educators and application builders. Therefore some serious issues of data privacy, trust, and security have arisen since both the educational, medical, and medical education realms operate in the U.S. under strict data protection laws such as HITECH, HIPAA, FERPA, and COPPA. Potential educational advantages of SNSs are similar to general e-learning benefits such as: anytime / anywhere instruction, lower costs for institutions, knowledge crowdsourcing, interconnectivity and facilitation of online collaboration, work, peer-to-peer instruction, and the provision of virtual training scenarios (role-playing) not available or practical in the non-virtual world. However, the business models of many SNSs are essentially advertising platforms and as a means of tracking online behaviors which can be monetized (with non-transparent policies of data collection and retention) raise some key concerns.

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