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Medical Student Attitudes Toward Cell Phone Use on Rounds

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SKMC Class of 2022: SI/ME Abstract

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Medical Student Attitudes Toward Cell Phone Use on Rounds

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Purpose: Mobile devices are ubiquitous and serve as an important resource for on-the-spot research about patient questions and conditions. However, even when a device is used to address patient needs, patients and members of the medical team may assume the student is using their phone for non-clinical activities and perceive the student as uninterested and disengaged. Medical students are aware of this potential for misperception, and as such, we designed a study to investigate the attitudes of third and fourth year medical students towards cell phone use on internal medicine rounds.

Methods: Our target learner population was third and fourth year medical students on their internal medicine rotations. Voluntary and anonymous surveys generated data in aggregate assessing the attitudes of students towards cell phone use while on rounds.

Results and Conclusions:

The results of our study show that medical students have a strong desire to use smart phones for professional reasons on rounds. The data also show that despite this desire, students do not feel comfortable accessing their technology for fear of professional repercussions from both attendings and patients. An overwhelming 75% of students reported that they would use their smart phones more frequently if formal guidelines were in place encouraging professional cell phone use. We hope to develop an intervention to eliminate the fear of professional repercussions medical students currently experience as digital learners using smart phones. This intervention would seek to bolster medical education and patient care by adding transparency to cell phone use between medical students, attendings and the patients they treat.

