



American College of
Emergency Physicians®

ADVANCING EMERGENCY CARE 

POLICY STATEMENT

Approved October 2020

Prevention of Harm from Internet and Social Media Challenges

Originally approved
October 2020

Replicating potentially dangerous internet or social media challenges may cause injury, poisoning, and other harm. Engaging in this high-risk behavior can lead to needless suffering, disability, and death, and places additional strain on the emergency healthcare system. The American College of Emergency Physicians (ACEP) believes that prevention of this behavior is an important public health objective and recommends the following actions to help reduce harm from internet and social media challenges:

- Emergency physicians should track atypical injury and illness patterns and identify trends that may indicate harm from an internet or social media challenge.
- Emergency physicians should stay abreast of evolving social media challenges and remain prepared to respond and notify local public health departments if patterns arise.
- As the leader in emergency care, ACEP and emergency physicians should respond to the public, when needed, to correct harmful misinformation posted on internet or social media sites.
- Public health professionals should survey injury patterns, especially clusters of atypical injuries, and alert the public about the dangers of internet and social media challenges.
- Distributors of internet and social media content should monitor their sites for potentially dangerous material and flag dangerous content with public health guidance or consider removal if patterns of harm occur.
- Parents, guardians, coaches, and teachers should observe minors for potentially dangerous or abnormal behavior and communicate with medical and public health professionals about high-risk behavior patterns.
- Government and academic institutions should support timely research into developing trends in injury and illness related to internet and social media challenges.

Copyright © 2020 American College of Emergency Physicians. All rights reserved.