American Telemedicine Association
Online Forums Netiquette and Policies

American Telemedicine Association Online Forums are intended for use as an interactive communication tool for conducting the business of ATA and to further telemedicine and telehealth activities. All users of ATA Online Forums should be aware that forums are public discussions and communications are not secure or privileged and may be read and disclosed for cause.

Policies

1. ATA encourages the use of its Online Forums as a communication tool to conduct ATA business and to further telemedicine and telehealth activities. Consequently ATA members do not have the right to privacy in their use of ATA Forums.

2. Forum participants must be current ATA members and will be removed from Forums if membership dues are not current.

3. ATA Forum may not be used for commercial activities, or solicitations.

4. ATA Forums may not be used to transmit patient protected health information or any type of confidential communications.

5. ATA Forums may not be used to transmit specific information relating to ongoing lawsuits.

6. ATA Forums may not be used to transmit obscene, offensive, harassing, unethical, illegal, or hostile messages.

7. Participants may not forward Forum messages to non-ATA members, and should obtain permission from the author before forwarding Forum messages to other ATA members.

8. Forum transmissions should not disclose any activity that could adversely affect the ATA, its officers, staff or agents.

9. Violations of any of the above policies should be reported immediately to the ATA Online Forum manager at info@americantelemed.org.

10. ATA reserves the right to monitor, audit, delete and read Online Forum messages. The ATA also reserves the right to remove participants from its Forums for cause.

Network Etiquette

Network etiquette, or *Netiquette*, is simply the customs and practices which guide the behavior of Internet users. It is the online equivalent of good social behavior, the ability to smile at people, shake their hand and look them in the eye when you talk to them. Unfortunately, many people do not practice good netiquette, perhaps because of the anonymity and immediacy of the Web, but also through thoughtlessness. So what are the basic rules of Netiquette?

1. Firstly, apply the same standards you follow in real life to your behavior online.

2. Familiarize yourself the ATA policies listed below regarding utilization of the ATA Online Forum.

3. Think of other people's time, and of the bandwidth you are using. There is a tendency for people to send large attachments around to many folks just because it's easy or people send emails with

fancy multimedia logos or signatures. These take up large amounts of room on computers and require people to take the time to delete or clean up the memory on their computer.

4. Be polite. If you get upset or "flamed", the chances are you have broken the rules of netiquette. Unfortunately, "flamewars" easily break out when many people start sending "flames" to each other. These are not only very upsetting, but clearly also congest the network.

5. Avoid "SHOUTING". The convention of the Internet is that capital letters are used expressively to show angry feelings. Apart from the fact that letters in upper case are often more difficult to read, be aware of this convention.

6. Respect other people's privacy. Privacy is as important on the online world, as it is in the real world so only contact people if you really think it is necessary. For any personal communications that do not apply to everyone in the Forum, send a separate email to that person and do not reply to the whole Group message or it will go to everyone on the list. Generally contact which includes abuse in any form, particularly poor language, or racist and sexist remarks, the sending of chain letters, broadcasting messages to massive lists, or actions which interfere with the work of other people are seen as breaches of netiquette.