HMS
HEALTHCARE MARKETING STRATEGY

NMC Compliance Guide for Doctors

What you can post, what you cannot, and how to fix your profile under the NMC guidelines on ethical advertising.

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6 October 2026: the day your website, social media and WhatsApp came under the NMC's advertising rules.

06.10

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How to read it

Allowed. The guidelines permit it.

Not allowed. The guidelines prohibit it.

Grey area. The guidelines do not settle it. Take the cautious reading.

Gold tags such as **Para 8.1(x)** point to the paragraph of the official text, so you can check every point yourself. Each chapter ends with an **HMS Prescription**: one action to take this week.

On 6 October 2026, your website, Instagram and WhatsApp came under the NMC's advertising rules.

2002
Indian Medical Council (Professional Conduct, Etiquette and Ethics) Regulations. The base code for doctors.

2 August 2023
The NMC notifies new professional conduct regulations.

23 August 2023
The NMC puts them in abeyance and applies the 2002 regulations again.

6 October 2026
Guidelines on Ethical Advertising and Public Communication take effect immediately.

What you need to know

Who is covered: registered medical practitioners (RMPs), and hospitals and medical institutions.
Paras 3.4, 3.7, 4.1

What is covered: any communication that promotes or solicits, in any medium, including digital and AI-assisted content.
Para 3.2

The 2002 code still applies. Hospitals also follow their Clinical Establishments Act or State Act, which prevails if the two conflict.
Paras 4.2, 4.3

"My agency posted it" is not a defence. You stay responsible for content you authorised, sponsored or knowingly permitted.
Para 4.4

The NMC says the aim is to keep healthcare communication informational, ethical and evidence-based, prevent commercialisation, and protect patients from misleading claims. Advice that quotes the 2023 regulations is out of date.

HMS Prescription

Treat every post, page and message as advertising until you have checked it against this guide. Start with Chapter 1.

Educate, don't promote.

This is the line every clause follows. You may share knowledge in your own name. You may not use it to win patients.

Official text | **Para 5.1** | **Para 8.1(i)** | **Para 8.1(ii)** | **Para 8.2(iii)**

✓ Education

Talks on public health and diseases for public awareness, in your own name and designation, without promoting your employer
Para 8.2(iii)

Health awareness programmes, campaigns and academic discussions that do not promote your practice or solicit patients
Para 5.1

Pamphlets with general health information, with no cure guarantee and no claim of superiority
Para 8.2(iv)

✗ Promotion

Soliciting patients, directly or indirectly
Para 8.1(ii)

Self-promotion, or letting your name, image, voice or testimonial be used to promote services
Para 8.1(ii)

Creating demand for unnecessary procedures, or fear-based marketing
Para 8.1(i)

The 3-question check

1. Does it help a stranger understand a condition, without asking them to book?

2. Would it still make sense with your clinic name and phone number removed?

3. Is every claim in it something you can prove?

An HMS rule of thumb, not NMC text. Information shared in the normal course, with no promotional intent or commercial benefit, falls outside the definition of advertisement (Para 3.2, Explanation I).

Rx **HMS Prescription**

Run the 3-question check on your next five posts. If any answer is no, rewrite the post before it goes live.

What counts as advertising now.

Advertising means any communication, in any medium, that directly or indirectly promotes your services, reputation, skills, qualifications, achievements or facilities.

Official text | Para 3.2 | Para 3.5 | Para 3.6

The media the guidelines name

Websites and blogs	Social media platforms	WhatsApp, Telegram, Facebook
Podcasts	Influencer marketing	Digital marketing campaigns
Sponsored posts	AI-generated promotion	Print, TV and radio
Public interviews	News articles meant to promote	Online healthcare platforms

The list is not exhaustive. Any audio-visual or digital communication counts.

✓ Information shared in the normal course, without promotional intent or commercial benefit, is exempt.
Para 3.2, Explanation I

✓ Government of India and state government campaigns in the larger public interest are exempt.
Para 7.3, Explanation

? Content with no sales language can still count if its content or manner of sharing is promotional. Frequency and placement matter.
Paras 3.2, 8.3(ii)

Rx HMS Prescription

List every place your name appears online: website, social profiles, listings, WhatsApp, YouTube. Each one is now covered.

Chapter 1

Disclosure on every post.

Every electronic post must show who is speaking, and that they are registered.

Official text | **Para 3.2, Explanation III** | **Explanation IV**

A compliant post, end of caption

Diabetes and your feet: five checks to do every evening.
…full educational caption…

Dr [Full name], [MBBS, MD (Specialty)]
Registered with [State Medical Council or NMC]
Registration No. [number]

Replace the bracketed text with your own details.

✓ Your name, qualifications, registration status and State or National Medical Register number on every electronic post.
Explanation III

✓ A hospital or clinic post that names a doctor shows that doctor's name, qualifications, registration status and register number.
Explanation IV

✗ A post naming a doctor with no qualifications or registration number.
Explanations III, IV

? Stories, Reels and Shorts. The guidelines do not say how to show the details in short formats. Put them on screen and in the caption.
Explanation III

Also check: your bio, YouTube description and channel About page, and each doctor page on your website.

Rx

HMS Prescription

Write your one-line disclosure block today. Paste it into every caption template, video end-card, bio and website doctor profile.

Chapter 2

Reviews and testimonials.

No fake, paid or manipulated reviews. And as a doctor, you may not request or share patient testimonials for promotion on social media.

Official text | **Para 3.2, Explanation V** | **Para 8.1(xi)** | **Para 8.1(xii)**

- ✗ Reposting a patient's thank-you message, video or Google review screenshot on your social media.
  Explanation V
- ✗ Asking staff, friends or family to post five-star reviews.
  Explanation V
- ✗ Buying followers, likes, views, comments or ratings.
  Para 8.1(xii)
- ✗ Using a celebrity, influencer, patient or employee to give a testimonial for your services.
  Para 8.1(xi)
- ✗ Manipulating search rankings, visibility or algorithms to look more established than you are.
  Para 8.1(xii)
- ✓ Leaving genuine reviews as they are. Never edit, buy or remove-and-replace them.
  Explanation V
- ? Replying to a Google review. The guidelines are silent. Never confirm that the person was a patient or mention treatment, because patient data stays protected.
  Para 7.4
- ? Asking patients for honest feedback. The guidelines do not spell this out. As a doctor, avoid asking for reviews to promote yourself. A hospital can run one open feedback process for all patients, with no incentive and no selection.
  Explanation V

Rx

HMS Prescription

Remove testimonial reels, review screenshots and "patient love" posts from your social profiles and website. Use patient feedback privately, to improve service.

Chapter 3

Patient photos, stories and consent.

Consent does not make a banned post legal.

Para 6.2: patient consent cannot, by itself, make permissible a testimonial, promotional patient story, before-and-after depiction or success claim that is otherwise prohibited.

Official text | **Paras 6.1 to 6.4** | **Para 7.4** | **Para 8.1(v)**

✕ Before-and-after photographs, or surgical results shown as advertising.
Para 8.1(v)

✕ Promotional cases, personal success stories, celebrity patients.
Para 8.1(v)

✕ Names, faces, anomalies or other details that identify a patient in public.
Para 7.4

✓ A case used strictly for scientific or educational purposes, with anonymised patient consent.
Para 8.1(v)

✓ Research-based case studies published in reputed medical journals.
Para 8.2(i)

? Educational case discussion on social media. “Educational” is not defined. Keep it anonymised and free of any call to book.
Para 8.1(v)

If consent is legally required, it must be:

Specific, informed, voluntary, documented and verifiable. Even then, crop, blur or black out names and identification marks (Paras 6.3, 6.4). Live surgery broadcasts follow the NMC’s separate framework (Para 7.5).

Rx

HMS Prescription

Audit your highlights, reels, galleries and brochures for patient faces, before-and-after images and case stories. Archive anything that is promotional.

Chapter 4

Claims you cannot make.

No guarantees, no superlatives, no unverifiable claims. This binds hospitals too.

Official text | **Para 8.1(iii)** | **Para 8.1(vi)** | **Para 8.1(ix)** | **Para 3.2, Explanation II**

Named in the guidelines

- "Guaranteed cures", "Miracle treatment", "Exclusive cure"
- "Best doctors", "No.1 Specialist", "100% success"
- "Painless treatment"
- "Leading", "most trusted", "top", "unmatched", unless objectively verifiable
  Para 8.1(ix)

Also barred

- Success rates or numbers of patients treated, used as a boast
  Para 8.1(iii)
- Statements that create unrealistic expectations or hide risks
  Para 8.1(vi)
- Unproven or secret remedies
  Para 8.1(vi)

Rewrite it

Instead of	Write
"100% success in knee replacement"	"Knee replacement: what to expect before, during and after surgery." An educational guide.
"Painless laser treatment"	"How laser treatment works, and what patients may feel."
"The most advanced machine in the city"	"[Equipment name] is available for [diagnostic purpose]." Facts only, no superiority.
"India's No.1 hospital"	"[Accreditation] status: [verifiable detail]." Only if you can prove it.

A ranking or award can be cited only if it can be independently verified, with its method, date and awarding body disclosed where needed (Para 8.1(ix)).

Rx

HMS Prescription

Search your website, bio, Google profile and posts for: best, No.1, top, leading, painless, guaranteed, 100%, miracle, advanced. Remove or replace each one.

Chapter 5

Offers, fees and health camps.

Festival discounts and “free consultation this week” banners are now a risk. Fees can be shown, but only plainly.

Official text | **Para 8.1(x)** | **Para 8.1(vii)** | **Paras 8.2(ii)(g), 9.3**

✗ Discounts, limited-period offers, contests, coupons, gifts, cashbacks, referral benefits or free procedures that could push people towards unnecessary consultations, tests or treatment, or that amount to soliciting patients.
Para 8.1(x), also binds hospitals

✗ Any commission, rebate, referral fee or lead-generation fee tied to referring or procuring patients.
Para 8.1(vii)

✓ A factual, transparent display of charges, packages and fees that does not mislead.
Para 8.1(x)

✓ A formal announcement of your consultation fees.
Paras 8.2(ii)(g), 9.3

✓ Greetings on national days or medical-profession days, with no professional gain in them.
Para 8.2(v)

? Free health camps and screening drives. The guidelines do not name them. Keep them educational, with no inducement and no promotion of your own practice.
Paras 5.1, 8.1(x)

Festive season test

If the post says “offer”, “free”, “% off” or “limited time”, it fails Para 8.1(x) before anyone reads the rest.

Rx **HMS Prescription**

Replace every offer banner with a plain fee display. Remove discount, free and expiry-date wording from your site, posts and WhatsApp messages.

Chapter 6

Agencies, influencers and platforms.

Handing your online presence to someone else does not hand them your responsibility.

Official text | Para 4.4 | Para 8.1(ii) | Paras 8.1(vii), (viii) | Para 9.4

You or your hospital → **Agency or freelancer** → **Influencer** → **Platform**

You stay responsible for what you authorised, commissioned, sponsored, adopted or knowingly permitted.

✕ Paying an agency, influencer or platform in a way linked to procuring or referring individual patients.
Para 8.1(viii)

✕ Using a third party to do indirectly what you cannot do directly.
Para 8.1(xi)

✕ Paid ranking of doctors on healthcare listing platforms.
Para 9.4

? A doctor engaging help with marketing. Para 8.1(ii) bars an RMP from engaging a third party to market medical services, but does not define where marketing ends and education, strategy or compliance support begin. Take written legal advice on your own arrangement.
Para 8.1(ii)

Ask whoever runs your online presence

Do you charge or pay per patient lead? Who approves each post? Do you buy followers or reviews? Do you use testimonials or before-and-after images? Do you label AI-generated content?

Rx

HMS Prescription

Set a rule: nothing goes live without your written sign-off against this guide. Get written confirmation that no payment is linked to individual patients.

Chapter 7

AI-generated content.

AI-generated promotional campaigns for commercial interest are prohibited. Other AI content must carry a label.

Official text | **Para 7.2** | **Para 7.6** | **Para 3.2**

✗ An AI-generated promotional campaign for commercial interest.
Para 7.2

✗ AI-made patient images, testimonials, voices or clinical outcomes, or a synthetic endorsement that looks like a real patient or doctor.
Para 7.2(b)

✗ AI content that misleads about diagnosis, treatment, outcomes, qualifications, patient experiences or services.
Para 7.2(a)

✗ Feeding patient information into an AI tool without following privacy, confidentiality and data-protection law.
Paras 7.2(d), 7.6

✓ AI-generated content that follows the guidelines, with a clear source mark saying its origin is AI.
Para 7.2

✓ Disclosure wherever the artificial nature of the content matters to the viewer.
Para 7.2(c)

? AI-assisted drafts that a doctor rewrites and verifies. The guidelines do not ban them, but AI-assisted promotional communication counts as advertising. Keep drafts educational and label AI origin where it is material.
Para 3.2

Advertising that uses personal data must also follow the IT Act, 2000 and the Digital Personal Data Protection Act, 2023 with its 2025 Rules (Para 7.6).

Rx

HMS Prescription

Add a rule to your content process: AI content carries an AI source mark, never shows patients, and never touches patient records.

Chapter 8

Channel by channel.

How the clauses apply where you actually post. Where the guidelines are silent, the table says so.

Channel	Doctor	Hospital or clinic
Instagram and Facebook	Educational posts with disclosure. No testimonials or before-and-after. Expl. III, V; 8.1(v)	Factual posts on departments, facilities, services. Doctors named in full. 8.3(i); Expl. IV
YouTube	Public-health talks in own name and designation. No promotion of employer or practice. 8.2(iii); 5.1	Awareness videos and factual facility information. 5.1; 8.3(i)
Website	Same rules apply to your own site. 3.5	Factual information. A doctor directory with names, qualifications, specialties, registration details, availability is patient information. 8.3(i); 9.1
Google Business Profile	**Grey area.** Keep listing details factual. Do not request reviews to promote yourself. Expl. V	**Grey area.** Factual details. Open feedback process, no incentive, no review manipulation. Expl. V; 8.1(xii)
WhatsApp	A named medium. Keep messages informational. No offers. 3.5; 8.1(x)	Service information in the normal course. No promotional broadcasts with offers. Follow data law. 3.5; 7.6
Paid ads (Google, Meta)	Promoting your own practice is self-promotion. 3.2; 8.1(ii)	**Grey area.** Only where law permits. Factual, no offers, no superiority claims. 8.3(ii), (iii); 8.1(x)
LinkedIn	Academic and educational content with disclosure. No solicitation. 5.1; Expl. III	Institutional facts, hiring and awareness content. 8.3(i)
Listing platforms	No paid ranking. Transparent profiles. 9.4	Same. Platforms must follow the NMC advertising norms. 9.4

HMS Prescription

Pick your two most active channels. Fix those first, using this table. Come back for the rest next week.

What you can publish.

The rules close the promotional route and leave a wide one open. Build your presence on it.

Doctors

A short video explaining a disease and its prevention
Para 8.2(iii)

Awareness posts for health days and public health campaigns
Para 5.1

Myth versus fact posts on a condition
Para 5.1

A patient pamphlet with general health information
Para 8.2(iv)

A case study published in a reputed medical journal
Para 8.2(i)

A greeting on a national or medical day
Para 8.2(v)

A formal announcement: start of practice, new address, absence, fees
Paras 8.2(ii), 9.3

Hospitals

Departments, facilities and equipment, stated as facts
Para 8.3(i)

Emergency services and contact details
Para 8.3(i)

Accreditation status, if verifiable
Para 8.3(i)

Charges, shown plainly
Para 8.3(i)

A doctor directory with qualifications, registration details and availability
Para 9.1

Hoardings with factual infrastructure and facilities information
Para 5.2

Health education material with no cure guarantee
Para 8.2(iv)

The posting formula

Educate. Answer one question a patient actually asks.

Disclose. End with your name, qualifications and registration number.

Stop. Skip the “Book now” prompt, the offer and the superlative.

HMS Prescription

Plan the next 30 days of content from the left column only. Four videos, four myth-versus-fact posts, one pamphlet.

What happens if you break the rules.

The State Medical Council may take graded action against a doctor. Each step is more serious than the last.

Official text | Para 10.1 | Paras 10.2, 10.3 | Para 11

1	**First violation**	Warning and mandatory ethics training
2	**Second violation**	Censure and a monetary penalty
3	**Third violation**	Suspension of registration for 3 to 6 months
4	**Serious violation**	Misleading cure claims, inducements for patients, digital mass solicitation: suspension for 6 to 12 months
5	**Repeated violations**	Removal from the medical register for 1 to 3 years

The guidelines say this action "may be contemplated" by the State Medical Council. These are bands, not fixed outcomes.

The process

- A show-cause notice comes first, with a chance to explain.
  Para 10.2
- The Council must pass a reasoned order stating the violation and its basis.
  Para 10.3
- You can appeal to the NMC's Ethics and Medical Registration Board within 60 days, then make a second appeal within 60 days of that decision.
  Paras 11.1, 11.4

Rx

HMS Prescription

Do not wait for a complaint. Fix your profile first, and keep a dated record of what you changed.

Your 30-minute self-audit.

Score each line. Circle **0** if you fail it, **1** if it is partly fixed, **2** if it is fully compliant.

	Check	Score
1	Disclosure line on every post and video Para Expl. III	0 1 2
2	Registration number on bios and website doctor pages Para Expl. III, IV	0 1 2
3	No patient testimonials or review screenshots shared Para Expl. V	0 1 2
4	No bought followers, likes, reviews or comments Para 8.1(xii)	0 1 2
5	No before-and-after photos or success stories Para 8.1(v)	0 1 2
6	No identifiable patient data in public Para 6.1, 6.4, 7.4	0 1 2
7	No “best”, “No.1”, “top”, “leading” claims Para 8.1(iii), (ix)	0 1 2
8	No “guaranteed”, “painless”, “100%” claims Para 8.1(iii)	0 1 2
9	No discounts, free procedures or limited-time offers Para 8.1(x)	0 1 2
10	No per-patient payments to agencies or influencers Para 8.1(vii), (viii)	0 1 2
11	You sign off every post before it goes live Para 4.4	0 1 2
12	AI content labelled. No AI patients or testimonials Para 7.2	0 1 2
13	Your photo not used as self-promotion Para 9.2	0 1 2
14	Fees shown plainly and factually Para 8.2(ii)(g), 9.3	0 1 2
15	Patient data in ads and WhatsApp handled per data law Para 7.6	0 1 2

26 to 30
Strong. Keep a dated record.

18 to 25
Fix this week, starting with the zeros.

Below 18
Fix now. Use the 7-day plan.

Your score is out of 30. This is a self-check, not a legal opinion.

Your 7-day fix plan.

One job a day, about an hour each. Start with the lowest scores from your self-audit.

Day 1

Write your disclosure line

Paste it into every bio, caption template, video end-card and website doctor profile.

Day 2

Remove testimonials

Take down patient thank-you reels, review screenshots and “patient love” posts.

Day 3

Clear patient content

Archive before-and-after images, patient faces, case stories and celebrity patients.

Day 4

Rewrite your claims

Search for best, No.1, top, leading, painless, guaranteed, 100%. Replace with facts.

Day 5

Drop the offers

Remove discounts, free procedures and expiry dates. Show fees plainly.

Day 6

Check who posts for you

Review agency, freelancer and influencer arrangements. Set a written approval step.

Day 7

Final pass and re-score

Label AI content. Check WhatsApp and website. Retake the self-audit.

Aim for 26 or more on Day 7.

Keep a dated record of every change. If a question is ever raised, you can show what you fixed and when.

Rx

HMS Prescription

Block one hour a day on your calendar for the next seven days. Start tomorrow.

Get your profile audited

Not sure where you stand?

The HMS NMC compliance audit checks your website and social media against the clauses in this guide, and gives you a written list of what to fix.

Audit page	**hmsconsultants.in/services/nmc-compliance-audit-doctors-hospitals**
Call or WhatsApp	**+91 81550 04010**
Email	**info@hmsconsultants.in**
Website	**hmsconsultants.in**

About the author

Akhil Dave is an ethical healthcare marketing strategist, consultant and mentor with 25+ years in healthcare marketing, including senior hospital roles. He is the founder of HMS Consultants, and is known as The White Shirt Man.

HMS Consultants is a healthcare marketing consultancy, not a law firm. The audit is not legal advice.

> **Knowing is Knowing, Doing is Doing™**

Sources and disclaimer.

Primary text

NMC Ethics and Medical Registration Board, Public Notice No. R-13014/01/2024-Ethics, 6 October 2026: *Guidelines on Ethical Advertising and Public Communication by Hospitals/Medical Institutions and Registered Medical Practitioners*. All paragraph numbers in this guide refer to it. The text was read from the copy published by Medical Dialogues: medicaldialogues.in/pdf_upload/2026/10/07/nmc-guidelines-on-ethical-advertising-and-public-communication-478642.pdf

Indian Medical Council (Professional Conduct, Etiquette and Ethics) Regulations, 2002, as amended. The base code, applied again by the NMC in August 2023.

Context and reporting

The South First, “Doctors on Instagram? NMC says no to patient testimonials, paid ads, AI promotions and ‘guaranteed’ claims”, 7 October 2026.
Medical Dialogues, “NMC issues ethical advertising, public communication guidelines for doctors, hospitals”, 7 October 2026.
ThePrint, on the 2023 regulations being put on hold and the Supreme Court petition on hospital advertising.

How to use this guide

Paraphrases are in plain language to help you understand the guidelines. Where the wording matters, read the official text. Grey-area notes are HMS’s cautious reading where the guidelines are silent. They are not NMC positions.

> ## Disclaimer
>
> This guide is general information for doctors and hospitals. It is not legal advice, and HMS Consultants is not a law firm. The NMC may issue clarifications (Para 12), and state laws apply to hospitals. Take legal advice on your specific content and arrangements. Edition 1, 12 November 2026.

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