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To OTASA Members

RE: WhatsApp platform and OTASA WhatsApp groups

We are aware that there is much concern about the WhatsApp platform and its privacy policy that has been introduced.

WhatsApp was bought out by Facebook some years ago and have introduced a policy of data sharing between the WhatsApp platform and Facebook. The implication of this is that there will be sharing of your phone number, contact list, your location and frequency of calls between the two platforms and with any other associated Facebook company. In order to use the WhatsApp platform, you will have to agree to their terms and conditions as well as data sharing.

However, the concern around the WhatsApp and Facebook platform is the sharing of the names and details of the people in the contact list and using of your information without their expressed permission. Certain information, including status updates can also be shared for these companies to do targeted marketing.

In South Africa this is prohibited by the Protection of Personal Information Act 4 of 2013 (POPI) and hence the Information Regulator has indicated that they will be engaging Facebook.

OTASA has many WhatsApp groups which have proved essential for quick and easy communication and for support and networking especially during the time of COVID -19. While we recognise the value and necessity of a social media platform, we have to comply with the POPI regulations as an organisation. We are investigating other alternatives and the process to re-establish essential groups where the details of the group members, as well as content, are protected. The POPI Act also has some implications of what information is shared by members on the group.

Occupational therapists who use WhatsApp and Facebook or any other social media platforms to communicate with colleagues and patients need to be cognisant of the POPI Act and the implications of the POPI regulations for the people on their contact lists, as well as so-called "channel marketing", which is based on conversations, "likes", website links used, etc. The same vigilance should be practiced in relation to website "cookies" and the cookie policies of websites visited from professional computers and phones.

We will keep you updated.

Kind regards v

Pat de Witt
President