Boundary Violations: Political Communications, Soliciting Contributions, Accepting Gifts & Social Media
Considerations from the AMA Code of Medical Ethics

**Political Communications**
- Refrain from initiating political conversations during the clinical encounter.
- Must not allow differences with the patient or family about political matters to interfere with the delivery of professional care.
- Judge both the intrusiveness of the discussion and the patient’s level of comfort before initiating such a discussion.
- Discuss political matters only in contexts where conversation with the patient or family about social, civic, or recreational matters is acceptable.
- Refrain from conversation about political matters when the patient or family is emotionally pressured by significant medical circumstances.

**Accepting Gifts**
- Be sensitive to the gift’s value relative to the patient’s or physician’s means. Physicians should decline gifts that are disproportionately or inappropriately large, or when the physician would be uncomfortable to have colleagues know the gift had been accepted.
- Not allow the gift or offer of a gift to influence the patient’s medical care.

**Soliciting Contributions**
- Assure patients that they need not contribute in order to continue receiving quality care.
- Refrain from directly soliciting contributions from their own patients, especially during clinical encounters.
- Solicit contributions by making information available, for example, in their office reception areas or by speaking at fundraising events.
- Obtain permission from the patient before releasing information for purposes of fundraising when the nature of the physician’s practice could make it possible to identify the medical services provided or the patient’s diagnosis.
- Refer patients or families who wish to make charitable contributions to appropriate information or fundraising personnel.

**Social Media**
- Be cognizant of standards of patient privacy and confidentiality - refrain from posting identifiable patient information online.
- Use privacy settings to safeguard personal information and content to the extent possible. Routinely monitor their own Internet presence.
- Maintain appropriate boundaries of the patient-physician relationship if interacting with patients online.
- Consider separating personal and professional content online.
- When they see content posted by colleagues that appears unprofessional they have a responsibility to bring that content to the attention of the individual, so that he or she can remove it and/or take other appropriate actions. If the behavior significantly violates professional norms and the individual does not take appropriate action to resolve the situation, the physician should report the matter to appropriate authorities.