

CO-HOSTED BY THE CENTRE FOR INNOVATION AND RESEARCH IN CHILDHOOD AND YOUTH (CIRCY) & THE SUSSEX CENTRE FOR HUMAN RIGHTS RESEARCH (SCHRR)

Critically Ill Children in the Age of Social Media: How can we protect ‘Generation Tagged?’

Wednesday 28 November, 1-2pm
Room G16, Freeman Centre

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In the recent cases of Charlie Gard and Alfie Evans, these children, who we classify as representatives of ‘generation tagged’, appeared on social media platforms including Facebook and Twitter as a result of the actions of their parents in order to advance a campaign to overturn the decisions of the doctors and the courts to withdraw life-sustaining medical treatment. This fuelled a crusade which led to ‘moral panic’ against ‘the State’ (represented here by the NHS and its staff) and an assumption that simply because enough social media following and support can be mustered, the medical and legal decisions will be overturned.

The cases of Gard and Evans have led to ethical and legal concerns about the impact of social media campaigns on the care and privacy of critically ill young children. Questions arise about the effect social media can have on the confidence of parents in the ability of medical professionals treating critically ill children to act in a child’s best interests - and the public perception of the medical profession and the NHS more generally. The ability of medical professionals to effectively undertake care of critically ill children under the pressure of a prominent social media campaign also raises cause for concern and can contribute to ‘moral distress’.

In this seminar, colleagues from the University of Winchester will describe the impact of social media on young children and parents, as well as professionals who might work alongside them - such as medical practitioners and social workers. They will also suggest ways in which ‘generation tagged’ and those who care for them might be better protected.

The logo of the University of Sussex, featuring the letters 'US' in a stylized, bold, orange font.

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