Case: Off your face from Facebook

You are the human resources manager of AllCure Pharmaceuticals. Its is a busy time and the people in the product approval department have called you because they desperately need to hire a new team member to assist them with the clinical trails of what could become the next blockbuster drug for the company. You get started and within a week you have managed to get three well-qualified applicants for the job. The interviews went well and there are two really good applicants. Both are women, recent university graduates, and you find it hard to decide between them.

The clinical trials that the new hire will work on are very important. They require a very reliable, meticulous work attitude, but also good social skills to manage the different relations between the clinics, the approving authorities, and various department in the company. A colleague suggests you check the two finalists out on various social media and networking sites to see how suitable they seem. Later in the day, you login to Facebook, and yes, one of them is there. Surfing through her post and photos you see a very sociable, obviously Well-travelled individual.

The other candidate is a bit more difficult to locate. This is too bad, as she already has some work experience and on paper is the slightly better candidate of the two. Her details are the only available to friends, but browsing through her list of some 800 friends, you find that one of your current interns is actually on her list. You call in your intern, who it turns out briefly met this second candidate on a course they took together at university a few years ago, and together you take a look at the private ‘private’ Facebook page of the second candidate. Doing so, you make some interesting discoveries: not only do you find a number of photos of her taking her shirt off at parties, but there are plenty of pictures of her apparently engaged in heavy drinking and even two pictures where she undoubtedly taking illegal drug.

You thank your intern for her help and sit back in your chair wondering what to do. You are worried about hiring someone who is too much into partying, and possibly even illegal activity, especially for a job that requires sensitive and conscientious work. Plus, you can just imagine what the reaction of patients, co-workers, or even more importantly, the officials at the regulating bodies might say if the pictures became public. ‘Hey, have you heard about the AllCure girl’ you can imagine them saying, ‘you really have to see these pictures…’

# Questions

1. What are the main ethical issues in this case?
2. What are main ethical arguments for and against the use of social media sites for potential employers in this situation?
3. Think of how you use Facebook, Instagram, Twitter, or other social media. Does this influence the way you might use these in the future?
4. Is there a gendered aspect to this story? Would your thinking change if the gender of any of the characters are different?
5. How would you finally decide as the human resource manager in this situation?

# Source

Based on Du, W. 2007. Job candidates getting tripped up by Facebook. 14 August 2007: http://www.msnbc.msn.com /id/20202935/from/ET