

Telemedicine

Standards of Practice of the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta (“the College”) are the minimum standards of professional behavior and ethical conduct expected of all regulated members registered in Alberta. Standards of Practice are enforceable under the *Health Professions Act* and will be referenced in the management of complaints and in discipline hearings. The College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta also provides **Advice to the Profession** to support the implementation of the Standards of Practice.

- (1) For the purpose of this Standard, “telemedicine” means the provision of medical diagnosis and patient care through electronic communication where the patient and the provider are in different locations.
- (2) A physician who practises telemedicine for a patient located within Alberta must:
 - a. hold a valid and active Alberta practice permit with the College; and
 - b. adhere to the College *Standards of Practice*, *Code of Conduct* and *Code of Ethics*.
- (3) Notwithstanding subsection 2 (a), a physician who does not hold a valid and active Alberta practice permit may practise telemedicine for a patient located within Alberta if:
 - a. the total number of telemedicine events are limited to five (5) times per year; or
 - b. the telemedicine event is for emergency assessment or treatment of a patient.
- (4) A physician who holds a valid and active Alberta practice permit and practises telemedicine for a patient located outside Alberta must comply with the licensing or registration requirements of the jurisdiction in which the patient is located.
- (5) A physician must not issue or sign a prescription, by electronic or other means, unless the physician:
 - a. obtains a medical history and conducts an appropriate examination of the patient adequate to establish a diagnosis and identify underlying conditions;
 - b. ensures there are no absolute contraindications to the treatment recommended or provided; and
 - c. has an appropriate, informed discussion to ensure the patient understands the risks, benefits and course of action if concerns are identified.
- (6) Notwithstanding section 5, a physician may issue a prescription without meeting the full scope of the requirements listed above in the following circumstances:
 - a. for emergency treatment of a patient; or

Terms used in the Standards of Practice:

- *Physician* means any person who is registered or who is required to be registered as a member of this College. The College regulates physicians, surgeons and osteopaths.
- *Must* refers to a mandatory requirement.
- *May* means that the physician may exercise reasonable discretion.
- *Patient* includes, where applicable, the patient’s legal guardian or substitute decision maker.

- b. in consultation with another physician who has an ongoing relationship with the patient and who has agreed to provide ongoing supervision of the patient's treatment; or
- c. in an on-call or cross-coverage situation in which the prescribing physician has access to the patient's medical records.

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