



A **standard** is the minimum standard of professional behaviour and ethical conduct on a specific issue expected by the College.

## Telemedicine

### Preamble

Evolving technology provides opportunities for new approaches to the practice of medicine through telemedicine. The College recognizes the value of telemedicine to improve access to care and increase efficiencies in the delivery of care. This standard of practice sets out the College's expectations of physicians who hold licences to practise medicine from our College and physicians who provide telemedicine to patients within the province of Newfoundland and Labrador.

### Definition/s

**Telemedicine** is the provision of medical expertise for the purpose of diagnosis and patient care by means of telecommunications and information technology where the patient and the provider are separated by distance. Telemedicine may include, but is not limited to, the provision of pathology, medical imaging, and patient consultative services.

### Standard of Practice

Physicians practising telemedicine are held to the same standard of legal, ethical, competent, and professional care as physicians providing personal face to face medical services. Patient quality, safety, and appropriateness of care are always kept in high regard.

When practising telemedicine, a physician **must**:

1. Consider the patient's existing health status, healthcare needs and circumstances, and only recommend telemedicine if it is in the patient's best interest.
2. Identify what resources (e.g., technology, equipment, support staff, etc.) are required, and only proceed if those resources are available and can be used effectively.
3. Ensure the reliability, quality, and timeliness of the patient information obtained via telemedicine is sufficient.

4. Obtain informed consent from the patient, when applicable.
5. Take reasonable steps to ensure that all medical information is transmitted in a manner which protects the privacy and confidentiality of the patient.
6. Ensure the physical setting in which the medical care is being delivered is appropriate and safe and that a plan is in place to manage adverse events and/or emergencies.
7. Refrain from prescribing narcotics or other controlled or regulated medications to patients whom they have not personally examined or with whom they do not have a longitudinal treating relationship unless they are in direct communication with another licensed health-care practitioner who has examined the patient.

### ***Licensing & Registration Requirement***

The College will not be issuing telemedicine licences.

The College considers the practice of medicine to take place in the jurisdiction in which the physician resides and holds a licence. As a result, all physicians practising medicine via telemedicine must hold either a licence to practise medicine in Newfoundland and Labrador and/or a licence to practise medicine in the jurisdiction in which the physician is located.

All physicians must also hold professional liability coverage which includes the provision of telemedicine to the intended patient.

### ***Referring Patients for Telemedicine***

Before consulting with or referring patients to out of province physicians for telemedicine, physicians must take reasonable steps to assure themselves that the consultation or referral is appropriate and the out of province physician is licensed by the regulatory body in his/her place of residence.

Physicians must inform their patients that the physician is not physically located within the province and inform them of the regulatory body which has licensed the physician. Physicians should also advise their patients that any complaints should be submitted to the regulatory body which has licensed the physician.

### ***Patients who Self-Refer for Telemedicine***

Patients should take note that all physicians providing telemedicine may not be licensed to practise medicine in Newfoundland and Labrador. Patients should make inquiries to determine whether the physician is licensed to practise medicine in another jurisdiction, the type of medicine which the physician has been licensed to practise, and any restrictions on his/her practice. Patients should note that the College will only investigate complaints relating to physicians who hold a licence issued by the College.

### ***Providing Telemedicine to a Patient outside of Newfoundland and Labrador***

Physicians who are licensed to practice medicine in Newfoundland and Labrador and wish to provide care to a patient in another province, territory or country via telemedicine should take note they must comply with the licensing requirements of that jurisdiction. The College recommends that physicians intending to provide such care should contact the regulatory College in the jurisdiction where the intended patient is located to obtain information about any applicable licensing requirements.

### ***Complaints relating to Telemedicine***

The College will investigate complaints made about physicians who are licensed to practise medicine in Newfoundland and Labrador, regardless of the location of the patient.

The College will not investigate complaints made about a physician who is not licensed in Newfoundland and Labrador but will share any information brought to its' attention with the regulatory authority that has jurisdiction over the physician.

### **Acknowledgement/s**

CPSBC (2016). Telemedicine.  
CPSMB (2016). Telemedicine.  
CPSPEI (2016). Telemedicine.  
CPSO (2016). Telemedicine.

### **Document History**

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