



## Practice Standard

### Treating in Groups

*Practice Standards are legally enforceable standards which set out requirements related to specific aspects of naturopathic doctors' practice. Practice standards are provided for under s.19 of the Health Professions Act. They link with other standards, policies, and bylaws of the College of Naturopathic Physicians of BC, and all legislation relevant to the practice of naturopathic medicine.*

### Introduction

This standard sets out the requirements of registrants who engage in treating patients in a group setting.

### Definitions

**Group Setting:** A physical or virtual setting where a naturopathic doctor is providing their professional services with more than one patient or member of the public present. This includes the provision of services in a non-clinical environment, a setting which is open to the public, and online or in-person settings.

Examples of where a group setting can take place include but are not limited to a personal residence, private business, outdoor location, online platform, or an area of a registrant's clinic in which a patient and/or any of the patient's personal information would be visible to other patients or members of the public.

### Principles

1. Registrants who deliver naturopathic medicine in a group setting must meet all standards of practice required of naturopathic doctors in B.C.
2. Registrants must not agree to treat a patient in a group setting if it is not in the patient's best interest, considering the patient's existing health status, specific health care needs and specific circumstances.

3. Registrants must ensure the privacy and confidentiality of a patient's personal health information is respected in accordance with [CNPBC Bylaws](#), [CNPBC Code of Conduct](#), [Health Professions Act](#) and [Personal Information Protection Act](#).
  - a. In a group setting, where personal information may be shared with other members of the group, a registrant must require patients to agree to maintain confidentiality of all other patient's health information disclosed/discussed.
4. Registrants must meet all criteria in the *CNPBC Practice Standard – Informed Consent*.
  - a. Registrants must not seek informed consent from or provide naturopathic medical services to anyone whose ability to consent is impaired by alcohol, cannabis, or illicit drugs.
5. Registrants must keep proper medical records for each patient as per the CNPBC [Standard on Health Records and Receipts](#).
6. Registrants must maintain adequate insurance coverage including coverage for a group setting.
7. Registrants must maintain universal precautions including but not limited to infection control procedures.
8. Registrants must ensure appropriate emergency procedures and equipment are in place.
9. Registrants must not offer or promote naturopathic medical services in a way that may lead to perception of coercion, inducement, enticement, or inappropriate incentives, including offering prizes, gifts, gift certificates, card points, bonus points, discounts, or time-limited benefits for naturopathic medical services.
10. Registrants must not represent the offered treatment as a “party”, or a “fun” or social activity.
11. Registrants must not perform naturopathic services in a group setting that includes the consumption of alcohol, cannabis, or illicit drugs.

## Applying the Principles.

- The legal, ethical, and professional obligations for registrants must be upheld in all clinical settings. If a registrant fails to meet the standard of care in treating a patient, it is no defence to say that they saw the patient in a group setting.
- Naturopathic doctors (ND) are aware that practising in a group setting may affect their insurance coverage. NDs confirm with their insurer that they have appropriate insurance for a group setting.
- NDs do not exercise undue influence on a patient. This includes the promotion of the sale of services, treatments, goods, or remedies in such a manner as to exploit the patient for financial gain. Inducements, enticements, and/or incentives to patients may interfere with the patients' autonomy and the ND's fiduciary responsibility. Specific concerns include:
  - The minimization of the inherent risk of treatment, whether this is understated by the ND or minimized in the mind of the patient

- The clouding of the context in which patient’s consent is sought or given
- The potential violation of the patient’s right to privacy.
- NDs do not offer any incentives, enticements, or inducements to promote a naturopathic medical service. Examples:

✗ “Host Discounts”

✗ “2-for-1” treatments

✗ Discounted Group Rates

- The marketing of naturopathic medical services delivered in a group setting does not represent the offered treatment as a “party” or a “fun” or social activity. This has the potential to diminish the perception of the services as a professional treatment with inherent risks, which may in turn affect the patient’s ability to give appropriate informed consent. Examples:

✗ “Botox Party”

✗ “IV party”

✓ Group Treatments

- Further to the above examples, a “Botox party” or “IV party”, where people receive cosmetic injections or intravenous injections in private homes or doctors’ offices in a group, pose a particular risk. In a group setting it can be difficult for the ND to determine whether patients are ideal candidates or have allergies or underlying conditions that risk patient safety. The inclusion of alcohol and/or drugs at such events would diminish a patient’s ability to provide informed consent, diminish the ND’s ability to monitor adverse events, and bring the profession into disrepute. It is inconsistent with public safety and continued public confidence in the profession.
- In order to maintain universal precautions, NDs ensure that they have examined the proposed group setting for safety prior to agreeing to a group treatment and that they have emergency procedures in place and all required emergency medical supplies readily available, as per the [CNPBC Emergency Medical Kit Checklist](#).
- If offering Online Group Programs, NDs ensure that they are meeting all the requirements set out in this standard as well as the CNPBC [Practice Standard: Telemedicine](#).
- Any marketing of treating in groups should meet the criteria of the [CNPBC Guideline to Advertising and Improper Inducements to Treatment](#) and the *CNPBC Practice Standard – Advertising*.

## References

- [Health Professions Act](#)
- [Personal Information Protection Act](#)
- [CNPBC Bylaws](#)
- [Naturopathic Physicians Regulation](#)
- [CNPBC Code of Conduct](#)
- CNPBC Practice Standard – Informed Consent
- CNPBC Practice Standard - Advertising
- [CNPBC Practice Standard – Health Care Records and Receipts](#)
- [CNPBC Practice Standard – Telemedicine](#)

*Disclaimer*

*In the event of any inconsistency between this standard and any legislation that governs the practice of naturopathic doctors, the legislation shall govern.*

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