



Standard of practice: telemedicine

According to the Federation of Medical Regulatory Authorities of Canada:

“[t]elemedicine 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.”

The role of the College is to regulate naturopathic physicians, not technology. **Registrants who choose to participate in telemedicine must continue to meet all of the same legal, ethical, and professional obligations that they must meet in a more traditional clinical setting.** If a registrant fails to meet the standard of care in treating a patient, it is no defense to say that s/he saw the patient only by way of audio-visual technology.

Registrants must use their professional judgment to determine whether telemedicine is appropriate in a particular circumstance each and every time its use is contemplated for patient care, consultation, and referrals.

Registrants should also be aware that practicing telemedicine may affect their insurance coverage. As a result, before practicing telemedicine, registrants must disclose such information to their insurer and confirm that they have appropriate coverage.

Registrants who practice telemedicine must:

1. inform their insurer of their intention to practise telemedicine and confirm that their insurance coverage will meet the minimum standards set out in the College’s bylaws;
2. consider the patient’s existing health status, specific health care needs and specific circumstances, and only use telemedicine if the risks do not outweigh the potential benefits and it is in the patient’s best interest;
3. ensure that the communication technology used and the physical location of both the registrant and the patient are consistent with applicable privacy law and regulations;
4. ensure the privacy and confidentiality of the patient’s personal health information;
5. take reasonable steps to confirm that the information and communication technology and physical location used by the patient permits the sharing of the patient’s personal health information in a private and secure manner;
6. ensure that the reliability, quality, and timeliness of the patient information obtained through telemedicine is sufficient;

7. ensure that the registrant's identity is known to the patient and the identity of the patient is confirmed at each consultation;
8. inform each patient of the limitations of telemedicine, as well as any heightened potential privacy, confidentiality, and information security risks associated with telemedicine;
9. when necessary, for example where a physical examination is required, refer the patient for an in-person appointment;
10. obtain informed consent in accordance with all ethical and legal requirements;
11. keep adequate records in accordance with professional and legal requirements;
12. communicate with the patient's other healthcare practitioners and provide follow-up care as appropriate;
13. prescribe medication only with extreme caution, particularly in the absence of a recent physical examination or laboratory results;
14. avoid the prescription of substances which may be addictive or susceptible to abuse to patients with whom the registrant does not have a long-term naturopathic doctor-patient relationship, unless the registrant is working in conjunction with another healthcare practitioner with whom the patient has such a relationship, and prescribe only in accordance with the College's standard regarding [Prescribing Practices: Countersigning Extra Provincial Prescriptions](#).

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