

College of Pharmacists of Manitoba (CPhM) Position Statement Virtual Patient Care and Ensuring Patient Safety in Pharmacy Practice

Virtual patient care is the delivery of health care services by means of electronic communication {telephone, video, email, or other online hosted service or platform) where the patient and the health care provider are in different locations. CPhM recognizes the importance for many patients to be able to access quality health care services delivered virtually, especially when the patient may be located in a remote or underserved community.

The provision of health care services virtually is to be used to enhance and complement in-person patient care. Virtual patient care alone is not a substitute for in-person care. It is not an acceptable standard of care to solely provide health care services virtually. A blended care model balancing in-person and virtual patient care is required in the provision of virtual health care services.

Established standards of practice for health care professionals supports the provision of high-quality health care for patients in Manitoba. Providing patient care virtually does not alter the ethical, professional, and legal obligations of health care professionals to practice in accordance with standards of practice as they would when providing in-person care.

The provision of virtual care alone can result in unsafe prescribing of drug therapy for patients when:

- Health care professionals do not practice in accordance with professional expectations and standards of practice for the provision of quality in-person care;
- There is no opportunity for in-person assessment and care when required;
- An ongoing relationship between the patient and the health care professional to monitor drug therapy and provide continuity of care does not exist; or,
- Health care professionals do not have access to secure and confidential provincial patient information systems that provide past medical, diagnostic and medication history necessary to inform decisions about appropriate drug therapy for the patient.

Pharmacists have an obligation to ensure patient safety in the prescribing and dispensing of drug therapy. Section 83 of the [Regulation](#) and the [Practice Direction on Ensuring Patient Safety](#) remind pharmacists of their professional obligation to take necessary and appropriate action with respect to upholding patient safety at all times, including the refusal to dispense drug therapy that has not been prescribed consistent with standards of care and patient safety. Both the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba (CPSM) and the College of Registered Nurses of Manitoba (CRNM) have developed standards for virtual care provided by their respective registrants. Please see the CPSM [Standard of Practice for Virtual Medicine](#) and the CRNM [Telepractice Practice Support](#) for reference.

Pharmacists are required to practice and comply with all applicable legislation, standards of practice, practice directions and code of ethics. It may be considered professional misconduct for a pharmacist to dispense medications that have not been prescribed consistent with standards of care and patient safety.

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