



The College of Naturopaths of Ontario

Guidelines

Assignment of Care

Introduction

The province of Ontario utilizes the concept of “controlled acts” to control who may perform healthcare procedures and responsibilities that have a high risk of harm associated with their performance. The controlled acts are listed in the *Regulated Health Profession Act, 1991* (RHPA). Each profession-specific act, such as the *Naturopathy Act, 2007*, specifies any controlled acts that the members of the profession are authorized to perform (the profession’s “authorized acts”).

There are also numerous non-controlled procedures which carry a potential risk of harm to the patient. Although these procedures are in the public domain (i.e. they are NOT controlled acts), they may require specific training and skills.

The term assignment refers to the process of a regulated health professional assigning the performance of a non-controlled procedure to another person. The assignment of procedures in appropriate circumstances may allow a more timely and efficient delivery of naturopathic care, making optimal use of time and personnel. In every instance of assignment, the primary consideration should be the best interests of the patient.

Assignment of Care

It is a general expectation that Naturopathic Doctors will be responsible for, and appropriately supervise all assigned activities within their practices. The level of supervision may vary with the risk associated with the assigned procedure. Direct supervision refers to situations in which the Naturopathic Doctor is physically present in the same clinical location. This allows the Naturopathic Doctor to immediately intervene when necessary. Remote supervision refers to situations in which the presence of the Naturopathic Doctor is not necessarily required since there is no potential risk of harm to the patient. This would be appropriate for certain clinical procedures and objective data collection.

The responsibility for all aspects of any assigned procedure always remains with the Naturopathic Doctor.

Assignment of certain procedures that are not controlled acts may occur as part of the Naturopathic Doctor’s examination and may occur prior to the ND assessing the patient. For example, pre-testing using automated instruments may occur prior to the ND seeing the patient.

Procedures that are completely objective, present no inherent risk of harm and require no interpretation by the person performing the procedure may be performed without the presence of the ND. This could include the collection of

information or performance of a physical exam (including taking blood pressure, temperature etc). However the ND is expected to review the results of these procedures and communicate appropriately with the patient.

It is expected that assignment will only occur with certain processes in place, including:

- Education and assessment ensuring the currency of the assignee's knowledge, skill and judgment;
- Documentation/references for performance of procedures; and
- Ensuring only procedures that the Naturopathic Doctor has the knowledge, skill and judgment to perform are assigned.

The Naturopathic Doctor remains responsible for all activity within his/her office, including assigned procedures. It is prudent to always ensure that any activities being assigned are appropriately supervised and performed in a safe, effective and accurate manner.

Good communication skills for both the Naturopathic Doctor and staff members are essential for effective delivery of patient care, particularly when procedures are assigned to another person. Regular staff training, assessment and an effective office policy and procedural manual may be helpful resources to promote competence.

It is also necessary to ensure that the person performing the assigned procedure is clearly indicated within the patient's health record.

Suggested Other Reading

Standard of Practice for Delegation

Standard of Practice for Record Keeping