



The College of Naturopaths of Ontario

Guidelines

Telepractice

Introduction

Telepractice is the provision of naturopathic care 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.

General Expectations

1. Members who choose to participate in telepractice must continue to meet all of the same legal, ethical, and professional obligations that they must meet in a physical clinic setting.
2. For every patient, and in each instance, the use of telepractice is contemplated considering the patient's best interest. Naturopathic Doctors must use their professional judgment to determine whether telepractice is appropriate and will enable them to meet all relevant and applicable legal obligations, professional obligations, and standards of practice.
3. Members who practice telepractice should:
 - a. Consider the patient's existing health status, specific health care needs, and specific circumstances, and only use telepractice if it is in the patient's best interest.
 - b. Ensure that the communication technology used and the physical location of both the Member and the patient are consistent with privacy laws and regulations. The patient's privacy and confidentiality of the patient's personal health information should be maintained.
 - c. Ensure that the reliability, quality, and timeliness of the patient information obtained through telemedicine is sufficient to make a diagnosis and provide the appropriate treatment.
 - d. Ensure that the patient is fully informed of the limitations of telepractice, as well as any potential privacy, confidentiality, and security risks associated with telepractice.
 - e. When necessary, refer the patient for an in-person appointment (e.g. where a physical examination is required).
 - f. Ensure that the Member's identity is known to the patient and the identity of the patient is confirmed at each visit.

- g. Ensure that your location and the patient's location allow for you to legally practice naturopathy.
- h. Ensure that the patient records note that the visit was performed via telepractice.
- i. Ensure that sufficient Professional Liability Insurance is in place.

Providing Telepractice Across Borders

Patient in Ontario

It is the position of the College of Naturopaths of Ontario that in order to provide naturopathic care in person or via telepractice to an individual located in Ontario the naturopath must hold a general class certificate of registration with the College of Naturopaths of Ontario

Patient in another Regulated Jurisdiction

Where a patient is located in another regulated jurisdiction (e.g. Alberta, British Columbia etc...) the naturopath must be registered with the regulatory College in that jurisdiction in order to provide telepractice. This includes short duration of travel etc.

Patient in an Unregulated Jurisdiction

Where a patient is located in a jurisdiction that does not regulate naturopathy (e.g. Ohio, Prince Edward Island) the Member must continue to meet all applicable laws and standards of practice of Ontario and ensure that they comply with any law in the jurisdiction where the patient is located that may restrict them from providing care.

Scenarios

1. Patient A used to live in Toronto but has recently moved to Calgary, Alberta. Patient A was a patient of Dr. Jane, ND in Toronto and has not found another ND since moving to Calgary. Patient A contacts Dr. Jane, ND and asks her to provide a renewal of her folic acid prescription. Dr. Jane, ND informs Patient A that as she is not registered to practice naturopathy in Alberta she cannot provide the prescription. She, however, recommends an ND in the Calgary area for Patient A to see, and offers to send a copy of the patient file to the Alberta ND to help facilitate the transfer of care.

In this scenario Dr. Jane, ND has appropriately recognized that, although she is registered to practice in Ontario, she cannot provide naturopathic services in another regulated jurisdiction. Dr. Jane, ND also helped the patient to find a new ND who can provide care in Alberta.

2. Patient A resides in Thunder Bay. She has hypertension and is looking for naturopathic treatment. She finds, via the internet, Dr. Jane, ND who provides electronic naturopathic services via Skype. Dr. Jane, ND is registered with the College of Naturopaths of Ontario. Patient A schedules a Skype appointment with Dr. Jane, ND. During the Skype visit it is noted that Patient A indicated that she had blood pressure readings of 160/100 in the recent past. Dr. Jane, ND recognizes that Patient A's blood pressure remains very high and could be on the verge of a hypertensive crisis, and refers her to local a MD for further examination. She recommends that they schedule a follow up appointment to discuss lifestyle modifications after Patient A visits with her MD.

Telepractice has its conveniences but also its limitations. Dr. Jane, ND recognized that a further in person examination and possible pharmaceutical intervention was required and appropriately

referred the patient for the necessary care. Dr. Jane, ND also recommended the follow up appointment to help meet the patient's needs of supporting her hypertensive treatment with naturopathic care.

3. Dr. Jane, ND has been practising in Ontario for many years and has moved to British Columbia to practise. Many of her long time patients asked if she can continue to treat them now that she is in BC. In order to be able to treat her Ontario patients via telepractice Dr. Jane, ND has maintained her registration in the General class in Ontario as well as being registered as an ND in BC. Dr. Jane, ND is also able to prescribe in both BC and Ontario, having successfully completed all the required courses and examinations. While conducting a visit with an Ontario patient, the patient shows her a rash that from Dr. Jane's evaluation would best be treated by a hydrocortisone cream. Dr. Jane refers her patient to her family physician for the cream.

As Dr. Jane, ND is dual registered in both Ontario and British Columbia she can provide naturopathic services to patients in both jurisdictions. Although in BC it is authorized, NDs in Ontario are not authorized to prescribe hydrocortisone cream. As the patient with whom Dr. Jane, ND was meeting is located in Ontario, she appropriately met her jurisdictional requirements by referring the patient to her family physician.

Suggested Other Reading

Standard of Practice for Consent

Standard of Practice for Record Keeping

Approval

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Latest Amendment Date: