



The College of Naturopaths of Ontario

Regulatory Guidance

Telepractice - Providing Naturopathic Care at a Distance

While more and more naturopathic doctors (ND) offer patient consultations virtually as a convenience and patients are requesting this type of visit, there are a number of factors to consider before providing a visit via telepractice.

Telepractice is the provision of naturopathic care to a patient at a distance using information and communication technologies. While these technologies are expanding and evolving, common examples include telephones, emails and video/audio conferencing such as Skype or Zoom.

In any practice situation, the registrant must comply with all regulations and standards of practice of the College of Naturopaths of Ontario. Just because the visit does not occur with the patient in the registrant's office, it does not mean it can be done without ensuring all requirements are met. For example, the naturopathic doctor-patient relationship must exist, informed consent must be obtained and proper records kept.

Below are some necessary questions to ask yourself when considering providing patient care via telepractice.

Is this in the best interest of the patient?

Registrants are to use their professional judgment to consider the circumstances of each patient and each visit and decide if the use of telepractice is in the patient's best interest. The patient's condition, their individual needs and the appropriate assessment and treatment are to be considered, not just the convenience and time-effectiveness of conducting such consultations.

Is the patient's privacy protected?

The registrant always has the responsibility to ensure that a patient's health information is kept private and confidential in accordance with the [Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004 \(PHIPA\)](#). This includes ensuring that reasonable security protocols are in place with respect to the technology being used. The use of cell phones and apps may allow for accidental access to the patient's information by unauthorized third parties. While the patient may consent to the use of such technology, the registrant still has the requirement to ensure privacy. The office of the [Information and Privacy Commissioner of Ontario](#) can provide information on the technologies and accredited

networks that meet the necessary security standards.

Also consider the physical setting of the patient and whether or not they are in a private or public space.

What are the legal requirements in the jurisdiction, if the patient is located outside of Ontario?

When providing care to a patient who is located in another province, territory or country via telepractice, the registrant must comply with the licensing requirements of that jurisdiction. This may require that the registrant holds the appropriate license/registration with the naturopathic or medical regulatory authority of the jurisdiction in which they are providing care via telepractice. For example, if the registrant is in Ontario and the patient is in British Columbia, which is a regulated province for NDs, an ND who is not registered to practise in BC would be considered to be practising in that jurisdiction without legal authorization. In a province or country where NDs are unregulated, the legislation of that jurisdiction may make it unlawful for them to provide certain aspects of naturopathic care for the patient, i.e. anything that is restricted to a medical practice and not in the public domain

It is the responsibility of the registrant to ensure they are aware of the laws of the jurisdiction where the patient is located and to abide by them as well as the regulations and standards of the College.

Will my professional liability insurance provide coverage if patients are located outside of Ontario?

Check with your insurance provider to ensure you have proper coverage for conducting visits with patients located outside of Ontario. Consider the possibility that someone living outside of the province may choose to initiate legal proceedings for alleged malpractice in their province or country, particularly if the jurisdiction allows for the potential of higher damages to be awarded as compared to what may be allowed in Ontario.

While patients are often looking for more convenient ways to access their health care providers through the use of telepractice, it is the responsibility of the registrant to ensure that every patient receives the same level of care and consideration of privacy as they would during an in-office visit.

Additional resources:

[Telepractice Guideline](#)

[Regulatory Education Program: Telepractice in the Post-pandemic Era](#)