

Providing Medical Care during COVID-19

UPDATED MAY 6, 2020

1. Regarding the Public Health announcement on April 30, what types of care can I provide commencing May 4, 2020? **NEW 05/01 – updated 05/05**

Physicians who provide non-insured health services to patients as part of their practice may resume providing those services as of May 4th, 2020 under the new Provincial Public Health Orders, provided that the provisions outlined below are followed:

- PPE must be worn as per the **Shared Health Requirements** found here: <https://sharedhealthmb.ca/files/covid-19-provincial-ppe-requirements.pdf> and <https://sharedhealthmb.ca/covid19/providers/ppe-resources/>
- Guidelines for opening of Therapeutic and Health Business outlined in the Manitoba Government's **Restoring Safe Services Plan** must be followed: <https://www.gov.mb.ca/covid19/restoring/phase-one.html#therapeutic>
- Services must be provided by **and/or overseen** by a **regulated health professional**. – **updated 05/05/2020**

Examples of these non-insured services include cosmetic procedures and surgery, injections and laser, as well as circumcision and hair transplant.

[Shared Health Guidance for Resumption of Services](#) – New 05/06/20

CPSM also recommends you review the “[New Normal](#)” message that was sent today, May 1, 2020 from Shared Health. It contains information on a number of important topics pertaining to care provided.

2. Am I required to be knowledgeable about COVID-19 and the province's plans?

You must make reasonable efforts to inform yourself of relevant information from Government sources and stay informed. Here is the most up to date information on COVID-19 in the province. <https://sharedhealthmb.ca/covid19/providers/>

3. Am I required to provide Medical Services during the pandemic?

Members are vital to the health care team and are critical to the success of managing this pandemic. **Members have a duty to continue to care for their patients and provide care to other patients during a pandemic.**

The [Code of Ethics and Professionalism](#) provides:

- Provide whatever appropriate assistance you can to any person who needs emergency medical care.
- Consider first the well-being of the patient.
- Take all reasonable steps to prevent harm to patients.

In fulfilling your individual commitment to patients, professional commitment to colleagues, and collective commitment to the public, you have an ethical obligation to be available to provide medical services during pandemics. In general, it is unacceptable to close your practice. Patients still need regular medical care for routine non-COVID-19 related health concerns and for chronic disease management. CMPA also has information which you may find helpful. <https://www.cmpa-acpm.ca/en/covid19>

4. But I am sick!

Stay home and take care of yourself!

5. But what if I am well but in self isolation due to a Government directive or am immunocompromised?

If unable to provide patient care due to health (yours and your family's), age, or government imposed self-isolation, then these reasons may limit your ability to provide direct medical care to people in need.

Take reasonable steps in the circumstances to help make coverage arrangements for patients' ongoing care needs (recognizing stresses on the healthcare system). Make sure you or another regulated health professional reviews diagnostic results. If possible, engage in indirect activities

that support the response effort during this pandemic. Optimize telemedicine and virtual care alternatives to providing care.

6. Younger healthier colleagues from our physician group are being assigned to assess suspect/confirmed COVID-19 positive patients over other colleagues who have higher risk conditions. Therefore, I will be at a higher risk to both contract COVID-19 and to transmit it to my family. What are the ethics of this?

This is one among many ethical issues confronting the profession at this challenging and exceptional time. Healthcare professionals are very anxious about COVID-19; not only in terms of their own wellbeing, but also concerning that of their families, friends and colleagues. Risk mitigation is essential in this context and involves a difficult balancing.

There is a need to recognize that there are healthcare professionals in the system that are at higher risk. We all need to work together to appropriately support these people. It is reasonable to support our colleagues more at risk by reducing their potential exposure to the virus, usually through strategic allocation of resources. Much of this decision making is institutional and beyond the control of the College. The healthcare system is in an extremely difficult situation and there are no easy answers. If you feel there are legitimate risk factors in your life that need to be considered, it may be wise to raise these to your colleagues so that the team in which you work can find a workable solution.

CPSM's position that **members have a duty to continue to care for their patients and provide care to other patients during a pandemic**. You are urged to carefully review the Code of Ethics and Professionalism (specifically to the 'Commitment to self-care and peer support' and 'Physicians and colleagues' portions of the Code of Ethics.)

As physicians we have a shared accountability to patients and a duty to place their interests above our own. These are the fundamental principles that should guide you now.

7. Some physicians live in other provinces, but practice in Manitoba or the converse. With the restrictions on border crossings can I still practice in Manitoba if I commute from Toronto?

[Shared Health guidelines](#) cover healthcare providers treating in Manitoba. CPSM expects every member to comply with these.

8. Should I defer non-essential diagnostic testing for some of my patients? What is essential during a pandemic?

Some of you may not have seen the [memo from the Chief Provincial Public Health Officer](#) that only essential diagnostic testing – laboratory, imaging and cardiac services, should be ordered for both inpatient and outpatient populations.

Tests are generally considered essential if they will guide immediate care management decisions. Use your professional judgement and clinical knowledge to determine whether testing is essential. Regular monitoring and testing of patients requiring INR, some therapeutic drugs, etc. should still take place.

This is a reminder of your duty to check the [Shared Health website](#) daily!

Click [HERE](#) for further info on providing medical care regarding PPE.