



## Standard of Practice Virtual Medicine

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Standards of Practice of Medicine set out the requirements related to specific aspects for the quality of the practice of medicine. Standards of Practice of Medicine provide more detailed information than contained in the *Regulated Health Professions Act*, Regulations, and Bylaws. All members must comply with Standards of Practice of Medicine, per section 86 of the *Regulated Health Professions Act*.

This Standard of Practice of Medicine is made under the authority of section 82 of the *Regulated Health Professions Act* and section 15 of the CPSM Standards of Practice Regulation.

1. In this section “virtual medicine” means the provision of medical care by means of electronic communication when the patient and the provider are separated by distance, and may include, but is not limited to, the provision of pathology, medical imaging and patient consultative services.
2. A member who advises or treats a patient through virtual medicine must confirm the identity of the patient.
3. A member must observe the following when practising virtual medicine:
  - 3.1. a member delivering treatment or gathering information through electronic means must take reasonable steps to ensure that:
    - 3.1.1. the hardware and software being relied upon is functioning properly and securely;
    - 3.1.2. any support staff involved in operating the equipment are adequately trained and competent to use the equipment; and
    - 3.1.3. the equipment is up to date and reliable;
  - 3.2. in the case of computer equipment, ensure that the possibility of computer hacking, computer viruses and malfunctions is kept to a minimum;
  - 3.3. in the case of an urgent medical or surgical procedure being conducted by a virtual medicine process, ensure a backup system is in place to protect the patient in the event of an equipment malfunction;
  - 3.4. if the patient controls some component of the equipment used in the virtual medicine intervention, for example, a computer or monitoring device, ensure that:
    - 3.4.1. the patient understands the importance of that equipment to the process;
    - 3.4.2. the patient is competent to handle it properly and to advise the appropriate person or facility in the event of a malfunction or an inability to operate it.

4. Where a member participates in a virtual medicine process as part of a team or for a specific health care facility, it is the member's responsibility to determine who will be responsible for the technical aspects of the virtual medicine intervention.
5. If virtual medicine is being delivered to an out of province jurisdiction, the member must verify whether the licensing authorities in that jurisdiction require registration or licensure, and if so, comply with those requirements.
6. In every potential virtual medicine situation, the member must carefully evaluate whether the patient can or should be treated via virtual medicine. This must involve a careful consideration of the limitations of the available technology and the patient's circumstances.
7. A member treating remote or mobility-limited patients must be aware of the virtual medicine treatment option and its potential application to his or her patients.
8. Any information that calls for action on the part of the patient, such as a laboratory result that indicates a potential or actual medical problem, must not be delivered through electronic mail unless the member incorporates a direction that the patient contacts him or her by a certain deadline to acknowledge receipt of the information and follows up promptly should the patient fail to do so.
9. Members must not allow incentives offered by the providers of virtual medicine technology to influence their decisions as to whether the virtual medicine option is appropriate for a particular patient and if so what technology is to be used.
10. A member must take reasonable steps to ensure that the medical information will not be intercepted by a third party. Members are reminded that *The Personal Health Information Act* applies to electronically transmitted personal health information.
11. Members practising in Manitoba are required to carry professional liability insurance or have CMPA membership. Not all virtual medicine activities are covered by CMPA. Members must confirm they are covered by appropriate liability insurance before engaging in virtual medicine.