
Standards of Practice: Communicating about Vaccinations

Standards of Practice

When communicating about vaccinations, naturopathic doctors must do so responsibly, ethically and acknowledging Alberta public health guidelines.

Introduction

Naturopathic doctors are strong proponents of preventive medicine and are morally obliged to be cognizant of public health policy with respect to vaccinations in the province of Alberta. All naturopathic doctors must respect that patients or their parents or guardians have both the responsibility and freedom to decide within the range of options available to them for the prevention of infectious disease.

Administering vaccinations is a restricted activity, as outlined in the *Government Organization Act*. Naturopathic doctors are not authorized to perform this restricted activity in the province of Alberta.

In order to communicate responsibly and ethically about vaccinations, naturopathic doctors must encourage patients to also consult with other health care professionals.

Definitions

Restricted activities: the indicated activities performed as part of providing a health service that require specific competencies and skills to be carried out safely, as defined in the *Government Organization Act s.7.1* and the *Health Professions Act*. Restricted activities are not linked to any particular health profession and a number of regulated health professionals may perform a particular restricted activity. A complete list of restricted activities is found in the *Government Organization Act s.7.1*. Restricted activities authorized for naturopathic doctors are listed in the *Naturopaths Profession Regulation*.

Scope of practice: refers to the knowledge and skills of naturopathic doctors and the comprehensive application of that knowledge and skills to assist patients. Scope of practice includes all the activities that naturopathic doctors are authorized, educated and competent to perform.

Standard of Practice: an authoritative statement that describes a minimum required behaviour of every naturopathic doctor and is used to evaluate individual conduct. Naturopathic doctors should always strive to practice above the minimum standards. Performance below the minimum standard may result in disciplinary action.

Vaccination: the administration of a vaccine to stimulate an individual's immune system to develop adaptive immunity to a pathogen.

Vaccine: a substance used to stimulate the production of antibodies and provide immunity against one or several diseases, prepared from the causative agent of a disease, its products, or a synthetic substitute, treated to act as an antigen without inducing the disease.

Naturopathic doctors demonstrate this standard of practice by:

1. having knowledge of the current Alberta Health routine immunization schedule;
2. communicating the current Alberta Health routine immunization schedule to patients;
3. accurately communicating risks of infectious diseases;
4. accurately communicating known benefits and risks of specific vaccines;
5. clearly informing the patient that they are not authorized to give vaccinations;
6. clearly informing the patient that naturopathic treatments are not a substitute for vaccinations;
7. ensuring that any communications about vaccinations are in accordance with the **CNDA Standard of Practice: Advertising and Marketing**;
8. referring to an appropriate regulated health profession or professional to encourage further discussion about vaccinations, in accordance with the **CNDA Standard of Practice: General**, **CNDA Standard of Practice: Collaboration in Patient Care** and **CNDA Standard of Practice: Transfer and Termination of Care**; and
9. supporting a patient's right to choose treatment with regards to vaccinations in accordance with the **CNDA Code of Ethics**.

Expected Outcomes

Patients are satisfied that:

- naturopathic doctors are knowledgeable about the current Alberta Health routine immunization schedule; and
- naturopathic doctors communicate appropriately and accurately when communicating to patients about vaccinations.

Related Documents

Government Organization Act

Naturopaths Profession Regulation

CNDA Code of Ethics

CNDA Standard of Practice: Advertising and Marketing

CNDA Standard of Practice: General

CNDA Standard of Practice: Collaboration in Patient Care

CNDA Standard of Practice: Transfer and Termination of Care