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## Standard of Practice: Telemedicine

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When using telemedicine, naturopathic doctors must do so in a safe, competent and ethical manner.

### Introduction

The CNDA recognizes the progress and development of telecommunication technologies. The role of the College is to regulate naturopathic doctors, not technology.

Naturopathic doctors who choose to provide naturopathic care using telemedicine must continue to meet all of the same legal, ethical and professional requirements required in a more traditional clinical setting. If the naturopathic doctor fails to this minimum standard of care, it is no defence to say that they saw the patient only by way of audio-visual technology.

### Definitions

**Evidence informed practice:** practice based on successful strategies that improve patient outcomes and are derived from a combination of various types of evidence including patient perspectives, research, standards of practice, policies and expert opinion.

**Telemedicine:** the provision of medical expertise 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 (as defined by the Federation of Medical Regulatory Authorities of Canada).

**Scope of practice:** refers to the knowledge and skills of naturopathic doctors and the comprehensive application of that knowledge and skill 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.

**Therapeutic relationship:** a planned and interpersonal process occurring between the naturopathic doctor and patient that is established for the advancement of the patient's health and well-being.

### Naturopathic doctors demonstrate this standard of practice by:

1. complying with all standards of practice, code of ethics and legislation;
2. considering the patient's existing health status, specific health care needs and circumstances and only using telemedicine if it is in the best interests of the patient;

3. recognizing that a therapeutic relationship is established using telemedicine;
4. maintaining a therapeutic relationship and professional boundaries with patients in a transparent and ethical manner, in accordance with **CNDA Standard of Practice: Professional Relationships and Boundaries**;
5. being knowledgeable of:
  - a) diagnostic, assessment and treatment limitations when providing naturopathic medicine using telemedicine, and
  - b) potential privacy, confidentiality and information security risks associated with telemedicine;
6. clearly communicating limitations and risks outlined in 5a) and 5b) of this standard to the patient when obtaining informed consent;
7. acknowledging limitations outlined in 5a) of this standard and referring in accordance with **CNDA Standard of Practice: General** and **CNDA Standard of Practice: Termination and Transfer of Care**;
8. ensuring that the naturopathic doctor's identity is known to the patient and the identity of the patient is confirmed at each consultation;
9. assessing and ensuring that the reliability, quality, and timeliness of the patient information obtained through telemedicine is sufficient and verifiable before providing treatment;
10. ensuring that the communication technology used and the physical location of both the naturopathic doctor and the patient are consistent with applicable privacy law and regulations and the patient permits the sharing of the patient's personal health information in a private and secure manner;
11. ensuring the privacy and confidentiality of the patient's health information. For example, the use of telemedicine and supporting technologies may produce records in the form of videos and voice recordings. All of these would be part of the legal record of care and must be maintained in accordance with **CNDA Standard of Practice: Records Keeping**;
12. being knowledgeable of and compliant with the applicable legislation of the jurisdiction where the patient resides if the patient is not in Alberta;
13. ensuring that they have appropriate professional liability insurance coverage to provide naturopathic medicine using telemedicine;

### Related Documents

*Health Professions Act*

*Government Organization Act*

*Naturopaths Profession Regulation*

*Federation of Medical Regulatory Authorities of Canada Policy on Telemedicine (2010)*

CNDA Standard of Practice: General

CNDA Code of Ethics

CNDA Standard of Practice: Consent

CNDA Standard of Practice: Termination and Transfer of Care

CNDA Standard of Practice: Professional Relationships and Boundaries

CNDA Standard of Practice: Records Keeping