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REGISTRAR  
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Monday, October 4, 2021

**Guidance to Physicians regarding unvaccinated patients.**

Dear Colleagues

The College has been made aware that certain clinics are considering, or have instituted, policies restricting in-person visits to only include patients who can produce proof of being fully vaccinated against Covid-19.

The College does not usually get involved in the operational aspects of how clinics and physician offices are managed and operated, but a universal policy that excludes all unvaccinated or partially vaccinated patients, regardless of the reason for the vaccination status, does not meet the expectations of the College's bylaws, policies, and guidelines.

**Although it is reasonable for a physician to request that a patient report their vaccination status to determine the most appropriate way to deliver medical services, it will not be considered ethical to require proof of vaccination status as an absolute prerequisite for attending their office when an in-person, medically necessary service is indicated.**

**Physicians are expected to either provide themselves or arrange and facilitate the provision of services to all patients under their care regardless of vaccination status or the reasons a patient may have chosen to be vaccinated or not.**

The College expects physicians to act reasonably and ethically in assessing how they will provide care to patients and the extent to which they will provide care in a situation in which a patient's condition may pose a risk to other patients, the physician, or the physician's staff, in keeping with the principles of the College's [Code of Ethics](#) and the [Code of Conduct](#).

There is an expectation that physicians who have an ongoing physician-patient relationship will provide continuity of care to their patients, regardless of their vaccination status. This may include virtual visits when appropriate, and in person care when indicated. Strategies may be employed to accomplish this as safely as possible, including options such as offering appointments during times when staff and other patient presence is limited, using separate entrances, isolating unvaccinated patients, using appropriate PPE etc.

If a physician is unable to provide the required in person services to the patient, there is an expectation that a reasonable alternative for care should be arranged and facilitated – for example by referral to a physician who is able to see them or an assessment centre etc. If emergency care is clinically indicated, a referral can be made to the Emergency Room, but this approach should not be the default process for managing unvaccinated patients. ER referrals

***To serve the public by regulating the practice of medicine  
and guiding the profession to achieve the highest standards of care***

should be done in consultation with the Emergency Room Physician and should not be a unilateral offloading of patients to the ER.

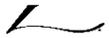
The College has been contacted for guidance on whether a patient who remains unvaccinated by choice can be terminated from a Physician's practice. Physicians have the right to terminate a patient-physician relationship, provided that it is done in accordance with the College's guideline for [terminating the patient physician relationship](#). Part of this Guideline is the statement that "A physician may ethically decide not to continue to see a patient as long as there are valid reasons, and the patient is not in immediate need of medical care". The Guideline also states that a physician should not terminate a physician-patient relationship based on a "prohibited ground of discrimination including age, gender, marital status, medical condition, national or ethnic origin, physical or mental disability, political affiliation, race, religion, sexual orientation, or economic status". Although vaccination status is not an explicitly prohibited reason for discharging a patient, the guideline does state that a patient must not be discharged on the basis of "making poor lifestyle choices".

Each interaction with an unvaccinated patient should be viewed as an opportunity to address vaccine hesitance, and that physicians can use the resources on the [SHA Vaccine Uptake Support page](#) to assist them.

Physicians are encouraged to consult with the [CMPA](#) for additional guidance and information.

The College remains thankful for the ongoing service provision and dedication shown by all healthcare providers during the Covid-19 pandemic. Please [contact us](#) with any further questions.

Sincerely,



Dr. Werner Oberholzer

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