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Guidance to Physicians providing care to patients in private offices/clinics and the updated public health orders for vaccination and masking requirements.

The extended Covid-19 pandemic has placed all healthcare workers under significant stress and has presented the profession with challenges on an unprecedented scale. The College wants to express its gratitude to the physicians and healthcare workers who provide the best medical care despite the trauma and loss brought on by this pandemic.

The College remains available to provide guidance and support to physicians– please contact any of the [management team members](#) if you have questions or concerns.

The public health order for mandatory masking will be removed at 12:01 a.m. on Monday, February 28th and the public health order requiring proof of vaccination or a negative test for public access into specific places is no longer in effect as of 12:01 a.m. February 14. In addition, employees of provincially regulated organizations no longer have to provide proof of vaccination or a negative test.

Physicians and patients have been inquiring what this means for physician offices outside of the SHA.

The following guidance is relevant:

- For businesses, The [Government of Saskatchewan has stated](#) the following:

“It is the choice of an individual business or facility to implement their own masking policy. If you enter a facility that requires a mask, patrons must respect the decision of the business and either comply or choose not to visit the establishment.”

“Municipalities, businesses, workplaces and event organizers may choose to continue requiring proof of vaccination or negative testing even without the public health order.”

- However, physicians have an ethical obligation to provide continuity of care to patients, an obligation not to discriminate against patients who have a medical condition, and an obligation to provide continuity of care to their existing patients.

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

- Physicians may decide to set aside certain times in their offices to tend to patient who are choosing to remain unvaccinated or refuse to wear a mask. Clinics can refuse to see patients who are unvaccinated by choice or refuse to wear masks except at those times. That assumes that there are sufficient appointment times available to address patient needs.
- Physicians can provide care virtually to patients who are unvaccinated by choice or who refuse to wear masks, if the virtual care provides the same quality of care as would be provided in an in-person visit.
- The College does not direct Clinic policy regarding their own staff. This is primarily an employment issue. Physicians should consult their lawyers for advice whether they can implement a mandatory masking or vaccination policy and how to implement and enforce such a policy.

As a reminder, Physicians are expected to provide medically necessary services to, or make arrangements to provide services to, the following groups:

- Patients who could not get vaccinated due to supply of vaccine, access, or accommodation at vaccine clinics,
- Patients who have a legitimate reason not to receive vaccination. Physicians have an obligation not to discriminate against individuals because of a disability, including a health condition. Accordingly, physicians have an obligation to do all that they can to provide appropriate care to patients who, for a medical reason, should not be vaccinated. Failure to do so may constitute discrimination under *The Human Rights Code*.
- Patients who require emergent care,
- Patients with whom the physician has a longitudinal relationship (where physicians have been providing ongoing care to a patient)

The College's [Code of Ethics](#) and [Code of Conduct](#) remains paramount in our approach to patients and their families.

Sincerely,



Dr. Werner Oberholzer

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