



COVID-19 - Q&A for CLINICS & PHYSICIANS

Last Update: April 27, 2020

- New FAQ's are highlighted in **Green**
- Updated FAQ's are highlighted **Yellow**
- FAQ's not highlighted have not changed from last iteration

Clinics

Can a clinic close during the pandemic? (3/30/2020)

Please refer to the document "CPSS expectations of Physicians during a Pandemic". If a clinic closes due to unforeseen circumstances, arrangements need to be made for coverage of the patients, patients need to be informed as per CPSS policy on [Medical Practice Coverage](#). This means that you or your call group must be available to discuss things/answer questions for your patients despite closure of the clinic building. If you are unable to arrange coverage, notify the CPSS and the SMA so that other contingencies can be organized. There is no requirement that clinics close.

Can the clinic require staff to work? (3/30/2020)

This is an employment issue to be addressed by physicians and their employees. The CPSS has no mandate over clinic operations or staff issues. Under some circumstances an employee may refuse to work if they have a reasonable fear for their safety. (The Saskatchewan Employment Act s. 3-31)

What steps do we take if there is exposure in the clinic? (3/30/2020)

Staff who were in close contact or may have been exposed without proper protection should self-isolate and monitor for 14 days. See [SHA Covid-19](#) for self-isolation and self-monitoring instructions.

What steps do we take if the doctor is ill/quarantined? (3/30/2020)

The doctor should arrange coverage if possible. Public health will be notified if a doctor tests positive. All staff who were exposed should self-isolate.

What is essential staff to have on site? (3/30/2020)

If clinic is operating, manager/doctors should determine appropriate staffing.

Can staff refuse to work during the pandemic? (3/30/2020)

That is an employment issue to be addressed by physicians and their employees. In some circumstances an employee may be able to refuse to work if they have a reasonable fear for their safety (The Saskatchewan Employment Act s. 3-31).

Can the clinic force employees to stay home? (3/30/2020)

Employers have a responsibility to ensure the safety of their staff. If an employee is suspected to be exposed or infected, they are sent home to self-isolate. This should be based on screening criteria that are consistent and based on public health recommendations.

What infection control measures should be in place? (3/30/2020)

Employ the usual precautions for any infectious respiratory disease in your office. This includes masks and hand sanitizer for patients who are possibly infected, an isolation or separate area for assessment and swabs of these

patients, procedure masks and eye protection, gown and gloves for you and any staff in close contact with these patients, thorough cleaning and disinfection of the surfaces in the separate assessment area. See [Government of Saskatchewan Covid-19](#) OR [SHA Covid-19](#)

Where can we obtain personal protective supplies for the clinic? (04/27/2020)

For more information on [PPE](#), please refer to the Government of Saskatchewan Covid-19 Website.

Physicians

What is the College's expectations of Physicians during this Pandemic? (3/30/2020)

The CPSS expectations of Physicians during the COVID-19 Pandemic can be found on the College's [CPSS website](#)

Am I required to be up to date on COVID-19 and the provinces plans? (3/30/2020)

You should make reasonable efforts to stay informed of relevant information about the infection, guidelines for testing and isolation, and provincial actions and mandates. Current information is available in SMA daily Practice Alerts, as well as the government of Saskatchewan website. [Government of Saskatchewan Covid-19](#).

Can I refuse to see patients with respiratory viral symptoms? (3/30/2020)

Please refer to the document: "[CPSS expectations of physicians during a Pandemic](#)." Some recommendations include: We recommended that you post a sign on your front door advising patients to call first, and to have masks and hand sanitizer at entrance and separate area and time to see those patients. You are not expected to put yourself or your staff at unreasonable risk and, if you do not have access to PPE, you may refer patients to a assessment/testing center, to 811 or to the emergency department for assessment if you think they may be at risk for COVID-19. Guidelines for triage of patients by phone and in person can be found at [Government of Saskatchewan Covid-19](#)

Can I close my office until the risk is over? (3/30/2020)

Please refer to the document: "CPSS expectations of physicians during a Pandemic." All physicians involved in direct patient care have an obligation to arrange for 24-hour coverage of patients currently under their care [Policy: Medical Practice Coverage](#).

If you are not ill, it is expected that you will be available to treat patients as needed during a health emergency. This may be influenced by any required quarantine of staff or doctor.

Can I take a holiday until this is over? (3/30/2020)

Please refer to the document: CPSS expectations of Physicians during a Pandemic. It is stated in the College guideline on [Physicians and Health Care Emergencies](#) that the College expects physicians to provide medical care during a health emergency, if you are not ill or under isolation precautions.

Can I require my staff to work during the pandemic? (3/30/2020)

That is an employment issue to be addressed by physicians and their employees. In some circumstances an employee may be able to refuse to work if they have a reasonable fear for their safety (The Saskatchewan Employment Act s. 3-31).

How can I protect my staff, patients and myself at work? (3/30/2020)

Phone triage, cleaning and hygiene measures at clinic, isolation of symptomatic or high-risk patients at clinic, personal protection with masks and eye protection, gown and gloves if in contact with high risk patients, reporting

of suspected cases to public health. Instructions on how to swab, how to clean isolation room, supplies the clinic should have, and suggestions for isolation space can be found at [Government of Saskatchewan Covid-19](#). CPSS IPAC guideline can be used: [CPSS IPAC](#)

What steps can I take when I finish a shift and come back home to my family? (04/27/2020)

Probably the most important step in preventing transmission of COVID-19 from patients to you, and from you to your family involves frequent hand washing and avoiding touching your face. Wash your hands thoroughly when you come home from work or from anywhere outside of your home environment. If you are working in a situation where you are more likely seeing COVID-19 infected patients, it may be reasonable to change your clothes and launder the clothes you were working in (in addition to the above hand washing).

Am I able to do house calls if needed? (3/30/2020)

It is conceivable that frail or immobile patients might require a home visit. Provided that COVID screening questions are negative and appropriate protective gear (ie: gloves, masks) and hand hygiene protocols are available, a home visit is a feasible option.

Can I consult over the phone/video (telemedicine)? (3/30/2020)

CPSS expectations of Physicians delivering virtual care during a Pandemic are:

1. That all Physicians licenced by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Saskatchewan (CPSS) to provide care in Saskatchewan are permitted to deliver virtual care to patients in Saskatchewan within their scope of practice,
2. The CPSS does not specify which method/application is used to deliver virtual care during a Pandemic,
3. That Physicians still have to take reasonable steps to ensure that Personal Health Information (PHI) is protected to the best of their ability,
4. That physicians develop an internal policy regarding the method of delivery of virtual care pertaining to the protection of Personal Health Information,
5. That physicians strive to ensure that the methods they use to deliver virtual care is consistent with HIPA to the best of their ability,
6. That the patient be informed that the virtual method of communication may not guarantee the integrity of protecting the PHI, and that in some cases this method of care delivery may not be optimal, and that the patient is given the option to opt-out of the virtual care interaction,
7. That complete documentation be kept of the interaction consistent with the [CPSS Regulatory Bylaw 23.1](#)

The CPSS [Policy on the Practice of Telemedicine establishes expectations for physicians providing care and advice through telemedicine](#). To the extent reasonably possible, a physician should practise to the same standards as when there is no emergency.

The following supports are now available through the SMA:

The Saskatchewan EMR Program has released a Virtual Care Quick Start Guide to support you in providing virtual consultations to your patients during the COVID-19 pandemic. Please [click here](#) to access the guide. Please contact emr@sma.sk.ca with any questions.

The Saskatchewan EMR program is pleased to offer a series of WebEx training sessions for the video conferencing software PEXIP. Please see the [attached schedule](#) for more details. Please contact emr@sma.sk.ca with any questions.

Can I bill for a telephone/virtual consultation? (04/27/2020)

Yes. There is a temporary billing code for virtual care during the epidemic. Please refer to the [SMA Compensation for Pandemic Services](#).

What are my options for income recovery if my practice is severely reduced or I must self-isolate? (04/27/2020)

There is funding available for physicians that must self-isolate. Please refer to the [SMA Compensation for Pandemic Services](#).

Do the same standards apply to practice in an emergency? (3/30/2020)

To the extent reasonably possible, a physician should practise to the same standards as when there is no emergency. Departures from the usual expectations should be carefully thought out and justified in the interests of providing the best possible care to patients during this emergency. This includes the College's standards and guidelines establishing expectations for primary care, confidentiality, consent, medical records, etc.

Do I need to keep records if I am practicing remotely? (3/30/2020)

Yes. Complete documentation should be kept of the interaction consistent with the [CPSS Regulatory Bylaw 23.1](#)

Does everything need to be entered in EMR? (3/30/2020)

In a health emergency, reasonable medical records should be maintained, but paper records are acceptable until there is time to enter or scan into EMR.

Do I need to keep CMPA up to date? (3/30/2020)

Yes. There are some provisions for continuing liability coverage between provinces and for changes in scope of practice in an emergency. Contact the CMPA for information at 1-800-267-6522. Updated information can be found on the [CMPA website](#).

Do I need to keep my license up to date? (3/30/2020)

Yes. In order to provide medical care a physician must be licensed to practise medicine in Saskatchewan. Expedited temporary emergency licensure will be considered for Saskatchewan physicians who have retired within the last 3 years. [Emergency Licensure](#)

Does the College have a process in place to deal with emergency licensure of physicians who are not currently licensed? (04/27/2020)

On March 16, 2020 the Registrar declared an emergency to allow licences to be issued to physicians who were licensed in Saskatchewan within the past three years, at no cost, and without meeting all of the usual requirements for licensure. Physicians currently licensed in other provinces may also be considered. [Emergency Licensure](#)

What if I want to help, but my specialty is not family medicine? (3/30/2020)

At this point in time of the Covid – 19 pandemic, scope of practice changes basically only have two categories:

Scope expansions for Physicians who are licenced with the CPSS (regular licences, or emergency licences), wishing to change their scope of practice **within the SHA facilities/jurisdiction**, to provide services outside their regular scope of practice.

- These are managed by the SHA, in keeping with the memo of Dr. Susan Shaw which was released 2020-03-30.

- The CPSS does not need to be informed of these scope of practice changes at this time. This is the same approach as suggested by the CMPA

Scope expansions for Physicians who are licenced with the CPSS (regular licences, or emergency licences), wishing to change their scope of practice **outside of SHA facilities/jurisdiction**, to provide services outside their regular scope of practice.

- These are managed by the CPSS
- The application form is available on our [website](#).

Can I prescribe OAT medications if a pain/addiction specialist is not available? (04/27/2020)

There have been some temporary guidelines regarding all PRP (prescription Review Program) medications. Please refer to our [CPSS OAT Standard and Guideline](#), [CPSS OATP Prescribing Policy](#) or call our PRP pharmacist at 306-244-7355.

Can I call in/fax prescriptions without seeing the patient during an epidemic? (04/27/2020)

To the extent reasonably possible, a physician should practise to the same standards as when there is no emergency. Physicians should consider whether a proper assessment can be done without seeing the patient and any departure from the usual expectations should be carefully thought out, and justified in the interests of providing the best possible care to patients during this emergency.

Physicians can now phone in any prescription to pharmacists, including all controlled drugs covered under the PRP ([Bylaw 18.1](#)). You will be required to give your CPSS License number to the pharmacist to verify your identity. If you do not know your license number, contact the Registration department at CPSS.

You may also refer to the [SCPP](#) (Saskatchewan College of Pharmacy Professionals).

What steps do I take if I think I was exposed? (3/30/2020)

Self-isolate for 14 days and monitor for symptoms. As testing may influence your ability to return to work and also any public health follow-up for your patients and staff, you may arrange to be tested by your physician or testing center if you are symptomatic. [Government of Saskatchewan Covid-19](#)

When can I return to work? (3/30/2020)

Changes to testing criteria (March 25, 2020) clarify the requirements regarding [discontinuing self-isolation](#).

What steps do I take if a patient from my clinic tests positive? (3/30/2020)

If you were the ordering physician, you will receive the result in order to inform the patient. It will be reported to Public Health, who may contact you or the patient. The patient should be advised stay at home on self-isolation if well enough. [Government of Saskatchewan Covid-19](#)

What are the current recommendations on who should be tested? (3/30/2020)

This information is changing quickly as things progress. Please see the Government of [Saskatchewan COVID-19](#) page for the latest developments.

Who reports test results to patients? (3/30/2020)

8. Test results are sent to ordering physician, and positive results are also reported to Public Health. The physician should inform the patient of results, as usual. That all tests ordered will be ordered, managed, and followed up by the ordering physician in accordance to the [CPSS Standards for Primary Care](#):

- 1) *Ensure that any practice location in which they work has appropriate systems in place to review and, if appropriate, provide follow-up care in response to any investigations ordered by the physician. When possible, the results of such investigations should be reviewed by the physician who has ordered the investigations and, when not possible, investigations results will be reviewed by a qualified medical colleague;*
- 2) *Ensure that any practice location in which they work has appropriate systems in place to review and, if appropriate, provide follow-up care in response to consultant's reports requested by the physician. When possible, consultant's reports should be reviewed by the physician who requested the consultation and, when not possible, such reports will be reviewed by a qualified medical colleague*

[Clinical management of test results](#)

How do I refer a patient for testing? (3/30/2020)

Referrals for tests (based on criteria in Provincial Guidelines) can be made through 811, Public Health or community physicians. If not performing swabs yourself at the office, you may call or fax a referral to one of the assessment/testing centers. [Government of Saskatchewan Covid-19](#)

Should I prescribe Plaquenil and azithromycin to high risk patients as a precaution? (3/30/2020)

Trials are ongoing, but currently only anecdotal and in vitro evidence have been found for use of these drugs in treating COVID-19, and only compassionate administration of specific antiviral treatments has been recommended. No drugs are approved for the specific treatment of COVID-19 in Saskatchewan. This information will be updated as it becomes available.

Saskatchewan Health states:

“Currently, there are no antiviral agents that have been demonstrated to have clinical activity against COVID-19. Several experimental therapies are being investigated for treatment and prophylaxis of COVID-19. Studies and clinical trials are ongoing both in Canada and across the world to explore the safety and efficacy of these agents. The foundation of treatment for all patients with COVID-19 remains supportive care, commensurate with degree of illness. The evidence for treatment of COVID-19 is changing rapidly. Updates will be provided accordingly should recommendations change.”

[Government of Saskatchewan Covid-19](#)

Where can I find information on potentially vulnerable populations such as pregnant women or patient information resources in different languages? (3/30/2020)

A [resource](#) from Harvard University outlines some of these pieces (please note, not modified for the Saskatchewan context).

How do I donate supplies? (4/3/2020)

The Saskatchewan Health Authority is **requesting assistance from physicians to secure additional needed equipment to help respond to potential COVID-19 patient critical care needs**. We are taking steps to order and secure additional ventilators and inpatient beds to increase our capacity to address the anticipated surge in patients requiring admission to acute care, intensive care and ventilation. While we are taking steps to secure sufficient

resources to address this influx, we do know that this equipment is in demand around the world. **If physicians have ventilators and appropriate beds that they are willing to provide to the Saskatchewan Health Authority**, please email: procurement@gov.sk.ca.

Quick Links

[Saskatchewan Health Authority \(SHA\)](#)

[Government of Saskatchewan – Ministry of Health \(MoH\)](#)

[Saskatchewan Medical Association \(SMA\)](#)

[Canada Public Health](#)

Canadian Medical Protective Association (for physicians): [CMPA: Public Health Emergencies](#)

[Center for Disease Control \(CDC\)](#)

[World Health Organization](#)

[College of Family Physicians of Canada](#)

[SHA Coronavirus Infection Prevention and Control \(IPAC\) Measures](#)

CPSS Bylaws, Policies and Guidelines

- [CPSS Regulatory Bylaws](#) - prescribing, medical records, scope of practice
- [Policy: Standards for Primary Care](#)
- [Guideline: Confidentiality of Patient Information](#)
- [Policy: Informed Consent and Determining Capacity to Consent](#)
- [Guideline: Infection Prevention and Control \(IPAC\) for Clinical Office Practice](#)
- [Policy: Clinics that Provide Care to Patients Who Are Not Regular Patients](#)
- [Policy: Physician Certification of Work Absence or Accommodation Due to Illness or Injury](#) (Form Completion)
- [Guideline: Patient-Physician Relationship](#)
- [Guideline: Physicians and Healthcare Emergencies](#)
- [Policy: Medical Practice Coverage](#)
- [Policy: The Practice of Telemedicine](#)

[Healthline 811](#)