Complementary and Alternative Medicine

The Standards of Practice of the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta ("the College") are the minimum standards of professional behavior and ethical conduct expected of all regulated members registered in Alberta. Standards of Practice are enforceable under the Health Professions Act and will be referenced in the management of complaints and in discipline hearings. The College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta also provides Advice to the Profession to support the implementation of the Standards of Practice.

(1) In this standard, Complementary and Alternative Medicine (hereafter referred to as “CAM”) means a group of diverse medical and healthcare systems, practices, and products that are not presently considered to be part of conventional medicine.

   (a) While some scientific evidence exists regarding some CAM therapies, for most there are key questions that are yet to be answered through well-designed scientific studies. These questions include whether these therapies are safe and whether they are effective for the diseases or medical conditions for which they are used.

   (b) The list of what is considered to be CAM changes continually, as those therapies that are proven to be safe and effective become adopted into conventional healthcare and as new approaches to healthcare emerge.

(2) A regulated member must not provide a CAM therapy to a patient until the regulated member has been approved by the Registrar to provide such therapy.

(3) Application for approval to provide CAM therapy must provide information about the therapy and the regulated member’s training and experience with the therapy, acceptable to the Registrar.

(4) Where it is uncertain whether the use of nutritional supplements, vitamins, pharmaceuticals or natural health products approved by Health Canada, or physical therapies are CAM therapies, those which are supported by scientific studies published in orthodox medical literature do not require application for approval from the Registrar.

(5) Notwithstanding clause (2), a regulated member who does not hold approval to administer a CAM therapy may provide the CAM therapy without approval from the Registrar to a patient who suffers from a fatal, incurable disease provided that the steps set out in subsection (6) are followed.

(6) A regulated member who provides a CAM therapy to a patient must ensure that the following steps have been fulfilled:

   (a) an orthodox medical evaluation of the patient, which must include the taking of an appropriate history, conducting an appropriate physical examination and conducting the

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appropriate diagnostic tests or investigations, as are relevant to the patient’s complaint, presenting condition and history,

(b) an orthodox medical diagnosis has been established,

(c) orthodox medical treatment options have been discussed with the patient,

(d) the unproven status, the safety and the potential toxicity of the CAM therapy have been discussed with the patient,

(e) the regulated member’s professional experience with the use of the CAM therapy and conventional therapy has been declared to the patient; and

(f) the number of treatments, time frame and costs to the patient for the CAM therapy are discussed with the patient.

(7) A regulated member must keep a patient record that documents completion of the steps in clause (6).

(8) A regulated member conducting clinical research into the use of a CAM therapy must have approval for the research from an approved ethics review board.

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