



Category: Medical Practice

Under Review: No

Issued by Council (*Moral or Religious Beliefs Affecting Medical Care*): January 1, 2010

Reissued by Council (*Conscientious Objection*): June 2016

Conscientious Objection

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) A regulated member **must** communicate promptly and respectfully about any treatments or procedures the regulated member declines to provide based on his/her Charter freedom of conscience and religionⁱ.
- (2) A regulated member **must not** withhold information about the existence of a procedure or treatment because providing that procedure or giving advice about it conflicts with his/her Charter freedom of conscience and religion.
- (3) A regulated member **must not** promote his/her own moral or religious beliefs when interacting with patients.
- (4) When Charter freedom of conscience and religion prevent a regulated member from providing or offering access to information about a legally available medical or surgical treatment or service, the regulated member **must** ensure that the patient who seeks such advice or medical care is offered timely access to:
 - (a) A regulated member who is willing to provide the medical treatment, service or information; or
 - (b) A resource that will provide accurate information about all available medical options.

ⁱ Canadian Charter of Rights and Freedoms, Part I of *The Constitution Act*, 1982.

Terms used in the Standards of Practice:

- “*Regulated member*” means any person who is registered or who is required to be registered as a member of this College. The College regulates physicians, surgeons and osteopaths.
- “*Must*” refers to a mandatory requirement.
- “*May*” means that the physician may exercise reasonable discretion.
- “*Patient*” includes, where applicable, the patient’s legal guardian or substitute decision maker.