

Joint Statement on Scopes of Practice

Canada's physicians, nurses, pharmacists and other health professionals recognize that a sustainable health workforce is a key challenge facing our health care system. In this regard, scopes of practice is an important issue that needs to be addressed.

The Canadian Medical Association (CMA), the Canadian Nurses Association (CNA) and the Canadian Pharmacists Association (CPhA) have approved the following principles and criteria for the determination of scopes of practice. The primary purposes of such determinations are to meet the health care needs of Canadians, and to serve the interests of patients and the public safely, efficiently and competently.

The CPhA, CNA and CMA believe that policy decisions taken in this area must put patients first. Secondly, they should be grounded in principles that reflect our commitment to professionalism, lifelong learning and patient safety. Thirdly, that there be recognition of the need for legislative and regulatory changes to support evolving scopes of practice. Moreover, we believe that health professionals must be involved in decision-making processes in this area.

Principles

Focus

Scopes of practice statements should promote safe, ethical, high-quality care that responds to the needs of patients and the public in a timely manner, is affordable and is provided by competent health care providers.

Flexibility

A flexible approach is required that enables providers to practise to the extent of their education, training, skills, knowledge, experience, competence and judgment while being responsive to the needs of patients and the public.

Collaboration and cooperation

In order to support interdisciplinary approaches to patient care and good health outcomes, physicians, nurses and pharmacists engage in collaborative and cooperative practice with other health care providers who are qualified and appropriately trained and who use, wherever possible, an evidence-based approach. Good communication is essential to collaboration and cooperation.

Coordination

A qualified health care provider should

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coordinate individual patient care.

Patient choice

Scopes of practice should take into account patients' choice of health care provider.

Criteria

Accountability

Scopes of practice should reflect the degree of accountability, responsibility and authority that the health care provider assumes for the outcome of his or her practice.

Education

Scopes of practice should reflect the breadth, depth and relevance of the training and education of the health care provider. This includes consideration of the extent of the accredited or approved educational program(s), certification of the provider and maintenance of competency.

Competencies and practice standards

Scopes of practice should reflect the degree of knowledge, values, attitudes and skills (i.e., clinical expertise and judgement, critical thinking, analysis, problem solving, decision making, leadership) of the provider group.

Quality assurance and improvement

Scopes of practice should reflect measures of quality assurance and improvement that have been implemented for the protection of patients and the public.

Risk assessment

Scopes of practice should take into consideration risk to patients.

Evidence-based practices

Scopes of practice should reflect the degree to which the provider group practices are based on valid scientific evidence where available.

Setting and culture

Scopes of practice should be sensitive to the place, context and culture in which the practice occurs.

Legal liability and insurance

Scopes of practice should reflect case law and the legal liability assumed by the health care provider including mutual professional malpractice protection or liability insurance coverage.

Regulation

Scopes of practice should reflect the legislative and regulatory authority, where applicable, of the health care provider.

Principles and criteria to ensure safe, competent and ethical patient care should guide the development of scopes of practice of health care providers.

This document is based on a January 2002 policy developed by the Canadian Medical Association which has been endorsed by the Canadian Nurses Association and the Canadian Pharmacists Association. We welcome the support of other health care providers for these principles and criteria regarding scopes of practice.