



SCOPES OF PRACTICE

Purpose

This policy outlines the principles and criteria that are important for physicians to consider when they are involved in the determination of the scopes of practice of physicians and other health care providers, whether regulated or unregulated, in all settings.

The primary purposes of scopes of practice determinations are to meet the health care needs and to serve the interests of patients and the public safely, efficiently, and competently.

Background

There are many factors impacting the scopes of practice of health providers: broadening definition of health, emerging use of alternative therapies, increasing patient consumerism, advances in technology and in treatment and diagnostic modalities, information technology, legislation, changing demographics, increasing health care costs, and the shortage of physicians, nurses and other providers. Scopes of practice must reflect these changes in societal needs (including the need of the public for access to services), societal expectations, and preferences of patients and the public for certain types of health care providers to fulfill particular roles and functions, while at the same time reflecting economic realities. These factors and related issues (e.g., access, availability and cost) are influencing governments and other stakeholders to

consider new roles and expanded scopes of practice for health care providers.

There is a need to define principles and criteria for understanding and articulating scopes of practice that ensure public safety and appropriate utilization of provider skills.

Principles for determining scopes of practice

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

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the public.

Collaboration and cooperation: In order to support interdisciplinary approaches to patient care and good health outcomes, physicians 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 coordinate individual patient care.

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

Criteria for determining scopes of practice

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 judgment, 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.

Conclusion

Principles and criteria to ensure safe, competent and ethical patient care should guide the development of scopes of practice of health care providers. To this end, the CMA has developed these principles and criteria to assist physicians and medical organizations when they are involved in the determination of scopes of practice.

The CMA welcomes opportunities to dialogue with others on how scopes of practice can be improved for the benefit of patients and society in general.