



College of
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PRACTITIONERS +
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College's Statement Regarding Tele-Practice During the COVID-19 Pandemic March 18, 2020

At this extraordinary time with the COVID-19 outbreak, adopting social distancing measures is one of many recommendations from public health officials to minimize spreading the virus. As a result, to support this recommendation, the provision of traditional Chinese medicine care for patients remotely via tele-practice is a growing area of inquiry from registrants. Tele-practice is defined as the use of technology for the delivery of services without direct contact between the practitioner and the patient. For our registrants, this would mean providing traditional Chinese medicine (TCM) and/or Acupuncture services remotely through audio and visual technology.

Given the rapidly changing and evolving nature of this current health crisis, registrants should ensure they are reliably apprised of the latest available information and be duly informed of the current standards of practice from the College. In our [communication](#) to registrants on March 10, 2020, the College provided registrants with resources and highlighted specific practice issues, such as infection control, recordkeeping, ethical billing, consent, practice within own limits, risk management and other safety and moral protocols that registrants are required to follow. These issues are especially critical now during these challenging times. On March 17, 2020, the BC Government declared a Public Health Emergency; and, as protection of the public is paramount, registrants are strongly urged to follow the latest advice and directives from the Office of the Provincial Health Officer. As a result, the College strongly recommends registrants to consider suspension of clinical service as an option.

The use of technology does not alter the ethical, professional and legal requirements surrounding provision of care. It is the responsibility of each registrant to choose the tools that are the most appropriate when they provide services to the public and they must do so by practising within their own limits and areas of training. Before providing any service, they should assess if it is in the patient's best interest to provide such service.

Tele-practice is a complex practice issue and has its limitations. For example, many TCM assessments e.g. observation, smelling/listening, palpation, cannot be done fully and directly by tele-practice. As such, it is not a comprehensive alternate to an in-person visit. Each practitioner needs to assess if the technology can assist in their service to the public within each specific situation. Hence, for example, if tele-practice technology is used for monitoring a current patient and providing an opportunity for the patient to communicate with the practitioner, this may be a very adequate temporary procedure. It is not, however, an effective method to use technology for gathering all of the required information for making a TCM diagnosis and providing treatment, such as administering a herbal prescription.

We recommend that registrants use technology as a tool to provide continuing communication with their patients when their clinics are closed. This ensures that patients with clinical questions will be supported promptly and consistently. The College acknowledges that tele-practice is not a suitable substitute for an in-person visit to provide TCM and Acupuncture treatments but is committed to the ongoing care and health of all of its stakeholders.
