

***Health Professions and Occupations Act – BYLAWS***

**Schedule XX**

**Part XX – Virtual Care Practice Standards**

**APPLICATION**

This Part applies to full pharmacists and sets out the standards that apply when providing health services through virtual care.

When a pharmacist provides virtual care, they will do so in accordance with these practice standards, as well as the Code of Ethics; the Conflict of Interest Standards; the Indigenous Cultural Safety, Humility and Anti-Racism Standard; and all legislation, regulations, bylaws and policies affecting pharmacy practice in British Columbia.

**DEFINITIONS**

1. In this Part:

**“enabling technology”** means any technology that permits synchronous or asynchronous communication between individuals in different locations, including through teleconferencing, video conferencing, or other internet-hosted service or application;

**“health service”** means anything that is done for a therapeutic, preventive, palliative, assessment, diagnostic, cosmetic or other purpose related to health and that is within the scope of practice for the designated health profession of pharmacy;

**“other practice site”** means a practice site other than a pharmacy, where a pharmacist provides a health service to or for a client, such as a clinic, health centre, or other health facility, but does not include a private residence or home-based office;

**“pharmacist”** means a full pharmacist;

**“pharmacy”** means a pharmacy under PODSA;

**“virtual care”** means any interaction between a client and a pharmacist that includes the provision of health services and that occurs remotely using an enabling technology, excluding contact using enabling technology for non-care purposes.

**STANDARDS**

**Technological Competence**

2. Before providing virtual care to a client, a pharmacist must have the knowledge and skills required to operate the enabling technology to be used.

### **Appropriateness of Virtual Care**

3. A pharmacist who provides virtual care must be located at a pharmacy or other practice site.
4. A pharmacist must work collaboratively with the client to exercise clinical and professional judgment in determining whether it is appropriate to provide virtual care to the client.
5. In exercising clinical and professional judgment under Standard 4, a pharmacist
  - a) must inform the client that pharmacy services may be provided either in person or through virtual care,
  - b) must not provide virtual care
    - i) if the client requests in-person care, or
    - ii) if in-person care is clinically indicated, including when the client requires a physical assessment or an assessment that requires in-person client observation, and
  - c) must not be subject to quotas, targets or similar measures for providing virtual care.
6. A pharmacist who assesses a client virtually must consider the limitations of the enabling technology and evaluate if virtual care allows appropriate assessment of the client.
7. A client must receive the same quality of care whether they are receiving that care in-person or virtually.
8. When assessing a client to provide a health service through virtual care, the pharmacist must be able to reasonably
  - a) access any information required to make an assessment,
  - b) complete a thorough assessment of the client,
  - c) identify and take appropriate action for any drug therapy problems,
  - d) refer the client to another practitioner if required, and
  - e) conduct follow up on the care they have provided.

### **Virtual Care to Clients Located Outside of British Columbia**

9. A pharmacist must not provide virtual care to an individual located outside of British Columbia, unless that individual already has a professional relationship with the client and
  - a) ordinarily receives care in British Columbia,

- b) requires follow up or monitoring in relation to the care the client ordinarily receives in British Columbia, or
- c) requires support to transition their existing care
  - i) to British Columbia from another jurisdiction, or
  - ii) from British Columbia to another jurisdiction.

### **Establishing a Professional Relationship and Obtaining Consent**

10. Where authorized under this Part to provide virtual care, a pharmacist must ensure they establish a professional relationship with each client for whom they provide virtual care.

11. Before providing virtual care to a client, a pharmacist must

- a) confirm the client understands and acknowledges the risks and limitations of virtual care,
- b) obtain the informed and voluntary consent of the client to receive virtual care, and
- c) ensure the client has the ability, and is comfortable with using the enabling technology.

12. Each time a pharmacist provides virtual care to a client the pharmacist must

- a) identify themselves to the client by providing their name, their employer's name, and professional role,
- b) identify the client,
- c) confirm with the client that the client is in a physical setting that is suitably private for virtual care,
- d) ensure there is a plan in place to manage adverse events or emergencies and make the client aware of appropriate steps to take if such adverse events or emergencies occur, and
- e) ensure that the client is aware how they may contact the pharmacist or pharmacy to follow up.

### **Witnessed Ingestion**

13. When a pharmacist assesses and witnesses the ingestion of a drug through virtual care, the pharmacist must use enabling technology with integrated audiovisual functionality that allows synchronous interaction and ensures all applicable witnessing requirements under all applicable practice standards are met.

14. A pharmacist must document that the witnessed ingestion occurred virtually.

**Documentation**

15. A pharmacist providing virtual care must document

- a) the client's acknowledgement of informed and voluntary consent to receive virtual care,
- b) the date, time, and enabling technology used to provide virtual care, and
- c) the name and the practice setting of the pharmacist providing virtual care.

**Client Confidentiality**

16. A pharmacist providing virtual care must

- a) be in a physical setting within the pharmacy or other practice site that is appropriately private,
- b) confirm the client's identity and location even if the pharmacist-client professional relationship pre-exists,
- c) take reasonable steps to protect each client's privacy, and the confidentiality of any information transmitted through an enabling technology,
- d) ensure that the enabling technology is functioning properly and maintains adequate connectivity to support the virtual care provided, and
- e) ensure that any other individuals participating in the virtual care encounter are identified to the client and the client consents to their participation, and that this disclosure is documented in the client record.

17. A pharmacist must advise the client if the virtual care encounter is being recorded and must receive and document the client's consent to making the recording.