Guidelines for the Provision of Telemedicine Services

This document is a physician guideline approved by the Council of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia.

*Guidelines* contain recommendations endorsed by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia. The College encourages its members to be familiar with and to follow its *guidelines* whenever possible and appropriate. Note that *guidelines* may contain references to College *standards*.

## Expectations and Complaint Procedures

In response to requests from physicians, hospitals, and the telemedicine industry, the Council of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia has endorsed the following guidelines for telemedicine.

1. The College of Physicians and Surgeons of Nova Scotia ("the College") expects any Nova Scotia physician who provides telemedicine services to adhere to the same standards of practice as a physician who sees a patient directly.

2. The College will review written complaints received from within Nova Scotia or from outside the province with regard to the provision of telemedicine services by any of its members.

3. If the College receives a complaint regarding telemedicine services provided to a Nova Scotia resident by a physician licensed in another Canadian or foreign jurisdiction, it may forward the complaint to the appropriate medical licensing authority in that jurisdiction.

These guidelines do not refer to intra-professional (e.g. doctor-to-doctor) consultations.

## Security, Confidentiality and Consent

Physicians who provide telemedicine services into Nova Scotia and physicians licensed in Nova Scotia who provide telemedicine services to patients in other jurisdictions are expected to comply with Nova Scotia standards for the following:
1) **Security and confidentiality of personal health information** (see the [Nova Scotia Personal Health Information Act](#)). Note that certain communication technologies may not adequately protect the security of personal health information. Physicians may wish to discuss this with the [Canadian Medical Protection Association](#).

2) **Informed patient consent** (see the College’s [Professional Standards and Guidelines Regarding Informed Patient Consent to Treatment](#)). In addition to the requirements of this document, the patient consent process for telemedicine services should include the following information:

   a) Where the physician is located and licensed to practice medicine
   b) How the privacy of the patient’s personal health information will be managed

**Liability Coverage**

The College recommends that all physicians providing telemedicine services check with their insurers regarding professional liability coverage.

**Telemedicine Policies in Other Jurisdictions**

Other Canadian and international jurisdictions may have different approaches toward complaints about telemedicine. The College expects its members to comply with the licensing or registration requirements of any jurisdiction into which they provide telemedicine services. Members are advised that when delivering telemedicine services into another jurisdiction, they may be held to the standards of that jurisdiction.

**Document History**

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