



## College of Homeopaths of Ontario

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## STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

<b>TITLE:</b>	PATIENT COMMUNICATION AND PHYSICAL EXAMINATION
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*Note to Readers: In the event of any inconsistency between this document and the legislation that affects homeopathic practice, the legislation governs.*

*College publications contain practice parameters and standards which should be considered by all Ontario homeopaths in the care of their patients and in the practice of the profession. College publications are developed in consultation with the profession and describe current professional expectations. It is important to note that these College publications may be used by the College or other bodies in determining whether appropriate standards of practice and professional responsibilities have been maintained.*

### INTENT

The intent of this guideline is to provide guidance to homeopaths and the public about CHO's expectations relating to patient communication and physical examinations when performed.

### PREAMBLE

Communication is an area where there is great potential for misunderstanding. Effective communication, both verbal and non-verbal, can hopefully avoid an incident of concern to both patient and registrant alike. By applying these guidelines with patients, Homeopaths may prevent an incident that can be perceived as inappropriate or abusive.

### DESCRIPTION OF GUIDELINE

#### 1. Words

Choice of vocabulary is important to maintain good patient relations. Select words that the patient will understand. Confirm the patient's understanding by asking them to repeat what you have communicated, if appropriate. Be attentive to answering the patient's questions in plain language.

- a. Be honest and direct. Demonstrate respect and concern for patients.
- b. When talking about sensitive matters related to the case it may be appropriate to seek additional verbal consent.
- c. Be sensitive to words that could cause misunderstanding.
- d. Use the correct terminology for body parts and procedures. Use charts or diagrams to help patients understand the services you propose.



- e. Speak appropriately about sexual matters as they relate to the patient's case. Seek the patient's verbal consent and willingness to speak on matters related to reproductive health or intimacy prior to asking related questions. Avoid use of sexual terms, jokes or stories of a sexual nature. Do not make sexual comments about a patient's body or clothing.
- f. Use an interpreter if necessary. Talk directly to the patient, even if an interpreter is present.
- g. Refrain from discussing your own personal problems with patients. Don't discuss your patients' personal problems except as required for appropriate assessment and treatment.
- h. Refrain from discussing your own sexual orientation.

## 2. Body Language

Non-verbal messages and gestures are as important as the words we use.

- a. Maintain appropriate and respective eye contact.
- b. Avoid body positions, sitting or standing which may be interpreted as being suggestive or offensive to the patient.
- c. Use physical gestures with care (they may be interpreted differently than intended, based on each patient's unique culture).
- d. Respect each patient's personal sense of space.

## 3. Listening

The goal of communication is mutual understanding. Therefore, listening is as important as speaking.

- a. Be an active listener. Listen and carefully observe your patient.
- b. Be an effective listener. Acknowledge and repeat what you've heard to ensure you've interpreted what the patient has said to you.

## 4. Physical Contact

For the purposes of assessing a patient, touch may or may not be required during the course of a regular patient visit. A homeopathic physical examination may be required and must be performed within the homeopathic scope of practice. Not all Registrants will choose to undertake a physical examination of a patient. It is at the discretion and judgment of the Registrant to determine if a physical examination is required.

A homeopathic physical examination may include: visual observation, basic diagnostic testing such as taking blood pressure, using a stethoscope to monitor heart or lung function, muscle testing, reflexes, and gentle appropriate surface touch.

A homeopathic physical examination **may not** include any controlled acts as outlined in the *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991*, Section 27(2), including any of the invasive procedures as set out in paragraphs 2 or 6 such as needle pricking, blood work, or probing with an instrument, hand or finger:



2. Performing a procedure on tissue below the dermis, below the surface of a mucous membrane, in or below the surface of the cornea, or in or below the surfaces of the teeth, including the scaling of teeth.
  
6. Putting an instrument, hand or finger,
  - i. beyond the external ear canal,
  - ii. beyond the point in the nasal passages where they normally narrow,
  - iii. beyond the larynx,
  - iv. beyond the opening of the urethra,
  - v. beyond the labia majora,
  - vi. beyond the anal verge, or
  - vii. into an artificial opening into the body.

Prior to performing a physical examination:

- a. Explain to the patient what you plan to do before touching.
- b. Encourage patients to bring an appropriate change of clothing (e.g. shorts) in case of need. Under certain circumstances, patients may be required to change clothing so that an assessment can be completed.
- c. Take care to avoid moving the patient's body parts so that it does not touch the registrant's thigh, genital or breast area.
- d. As required use gloves, in accordance with the Standard of Practice – Infection Control.
- e. Use gentle but firm pressure when touching the patient. Ensure that your movements are deliberate and efficient.
- f. Respect the patient's privacy. If a patient needs to change clothing, ensure that they may do so in private. When a private office space is not available, use a privacy screen and partition. Allow patients enough time and privacy while changing. Ensure that office staff who assist patients are sensitive to patient's privacy. Some practitioners have found it helpful to post a notice advising patients of their right to have an assistant/friend or family member present during an examination.

Further precautions

A homeopath would rarely, if ever, have a patient completely disrobe or expose a genital or breast area. If a Registrant needs to examine or palpate tissue near the genital area, the Registrant should:

- a. First explain why this is indicated and precisely what will be done.
- b. Obtain an informed consent.
- c. Have a witness present.
- d. Do everything possible to avoid inadvertent touching or brushing of the patient's genitals.
- e. Use a draping cloth or sheeting to cover areas which are not being examined to ensure patient privacy.



## RELEVANT COMPETENCIES & PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

*Competencies are the specific knowledge, skills, attributes and abilities required of an entry-to-practice homeopath in order to practise safely and ethically. These competencies, from the Competency Profile for Entry-to-Practice Homeopaths Practising in Ontario, were adopted by the transitional Council of the College of Homeopaths of Ontario in 2012.*

1.3 Demonstrate sensitivity to and respect for each patient's rights, autonomy, dignity and uniqueness. (K, S)

### RELEVANT PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

1. Identify homeopath's role in fostering the patient's right to make his/her own decisions regarding health and social well-being.
2. Communicate in a manner that respects the patient's uniqueness.
3. Identify socio-economic or socio-cultural factors that may be relevant to the patient.

1.7 Collaborate with colleagues, other health-care practitioners and community resources to facilitate patient care.

### RELEVANT PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

1. Explain the value of collaborating with colleagues and other health-care professionals.
2. Recognize opportunities for shared decision-making while maintaining patient confidentiality.
3. Describe approaches to intraprofessional and interprofessional collaboration.
4. Establish intraprofessional and interprofessional collaboration in practice.

1.9 Use effective communication to develop professional relationships with patients, families and other health-care professionals.

### RELEVANT PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

1. Use clear and concise written communication.
2. Use clear and concise verbal communication.
3. Adapt communication to recipient (e.g., patients, families and other health-care professionals).
4. Confirm that communication is being understood by recipients.

2.27 Establish a therapeutic relationship by developing a rapport with patients that facilitates the sharing of information in a professional environment.

### RELEVANT PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

1. Use active listening to facilitate reciprocal communication.
2. Understand non-verbal communication.
3. Minimize obstacles to communication.
4. Manage personal responses to patient's information.

2.28 Collect detailed information regarding the health status of the patient to obtain a totality of symptoms using the following:

c. Homeopath's observation (i.e., visual, etc.) (K, S)

### RELEVANT PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

1. Observe patient's non-verbal communication.
2. Document detailed information about observations.

2.28 Collect detailed information regarding the health status of the patient to obtain a totality of symptoms using the following:

d. Physical exam, as required, within the scope of practice of homeopathy; (K,S)

### RELEVANT PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

1. Demonstrate an understanding of conditions when physical exam may be necessary.



2. Conduct physical exam as necessary.
  3. Document observations and clinical data from physical exam.
- 2.29 Utilize effective listening and communication skills, taking into account the age, gender, culture, language, ability, emotional and developmental state of the patient. (K)  
RELEVANT PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
1. Demonstrate active listening skills.
  2. Adapt communication techniques to the recipient (e.g., patient, family, other health-care professionals).
- 2.40 Communicate individualized treatment plan to the patient.  
RELEVANT PERFORMANCE INDICATORS
1. Adapt communication of treatment plan to the patient.
  2. Confirm that patient understands the treatment

## DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this standard the following definitions apply:

### Active listening

Active listening aids the homeopath in recording the patient's words and non-verbal cues. As contrasted with passive listening, the homeopath confirms what he/she has heard by restating or paraphrasing in order to optimize case-taking. This form of communication requires the listener to be compassionate, engaged and objective.

### Homeopath

"Homeopath" means a registrant of the College of Homeopaths of Ontario.

### Registrant

A Registrant is a member of the College of Homeopaths of Ontario.

## LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

*Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991, s.27(2)*

*Homeopathy Act, 2007, Ontario Regulation 315/12 Professional Misconduct* (Note: This regulation is not yet in force. It comes into force on the day named by proclamation of the Lieutenant Governor.):

2. Abusing a patient or a patient's representative verbally, physically, psychologically or emotionally.
10. Performing a controlled act that the member is not authorized to perform.

## RELATED DOCUMENTS

#10 Standard of Practice of Informed Consent

#15 Standard of Practice of Scope of Practice

#1 Guideline on Record Keeping and Privacy of Information