



College of Homeopaths of Ontario

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STANDARDS AND GUIDELINES

TITLE:	COMMUNICATING A HOMEOPATHIC ASSESSMENT
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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.

POLICY

To promote informed decision-making on behalf of the patient, a Registrant must communicate the results of the homeopathic assessment and obtain informed consent prior to proceeding with a treatment plan.

INTENT

The intent of this standard is to advise Registrants on how to effectively, ethically and competently communicate a homeopathic assessment to their patients.

PREAMBLE

To enable patients to make informed decisions about their health care options and treatments, they require factual and adequate information about the assessment of their current state of health, potential outcomes from having and not having treatment, the treatment options available to them, and the potential risks of harm involved from these treatment options.

Informed consent is a requirement under the *Health Care Consent Act* (See the College's Standard of Practice on Informed Consent).

Prior to arriving at a treatment plan, a sufficient assessment of the patient's condition must be performed. The outcome of the assessment must be communicated to the patient, along with a recommended course of action (treatment plan or referral). Prior to commencing with the treatment plan, the homeopath is required to obtain initial and ongoing verbal and/or written informed consent.

Clear and consistent communication, including advising the patient of the assessment and obtaining written informed consent, is in the best interest of the patient. It improves the patient-practitioner relationship and reduces the risk of complaints and misinformation.



Communicating a homeopathic assessment and communicating a medical diagnosis¹ are not the same. Communicating a homeopathic assessment informs the patient about the specific indicators within the practitioner's observations and case taking which point to a homeopathic prescription or recommended course of action.

A homeopath cannot communicate a diagnosis. However, the Registrant can discuss the assessment findings referring to the disease or condition markers, the function or reactions of the body and its systems, and the nature of the treatment plan.

Communicating a medical diagnosis indicate with a high degree of probability that the patient's symptoms and test results conclude the presence of a specific disease or disorder. The communication of a diagnosis to a patient in the course of health care delivery is a controlled act under the *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991*, and outside of the homeopathic scope of practice² set out in the *Homeopathic Act, 2007*. As such, homeopaths may not communicate a diagnosis to a patient. It is appropriate for a homeopath to communicate a diagnosis to another homeopath, or another health care professional, but not to a patient.

A summary of any conversation related to the patient's case between homeopaths or between a homeopath and another health care professional should be included in the patient's chart. The notes should refrain from including the known or suspected medical diagnosis, as this may be inadvertently interpreted as communicating a diagnosis.

Communicating a diagnosis is one of thirteen controlled acts set out in Section 27(2) of the *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991* (RHPA). Unless given the authority to do so through regulation or delegation from another regulated health care professional, registrants are prohibited from "Communicating to the individual or his or her personal representative a diagnosis identifying a disease or disorder as the cause of symptoms of the individual in circumstances in which it is reasonably foreseeable that the individual or his or her personal representative will rely on the diagnosis."³

DESCRIPTION OF STANDARD

Before communicating the results of a homeopathic assessment, a registrant shall:

- Consider the patient's medical history;
- Formulate a clinical impression based on an assessment;

To avoid communicating a homeopathic assessment inappropriately, homeopaths need to ask themselves:

1. Am I giving the patient a name or label for the disease or disorder that is the root cause of the symptoms?
2. What does the patient already know about his or her disease or disorder, if they have already received a diagnosis?

These questions are important to determine the boundaries of the conversation a homeopath may have with patients. As a homeopath you must know that:

¹ Communicating a diagnosis, as referred to in the *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991* refers to a medical diagnosis, and is permissible by only those authorized under the Act.

² Refer to the College's Standard of Practice on Scope of Practice.

³ Section 27(2) para 1, *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991* (RHPA)



- It **is** legal for a homeopath to formulate a homeopathic diagnosis or communicate a diagnosis to other health care providers; however, homeopaths cannot inform the patient of the diagnosis unless they have a delegation to do so.
- It **is** legal for homeopaths to share the results of assessments with the patient unless the result itself is confirmation and labeling of a disease or disorder, e.g. a Hepatitis C Positive laboratory result.
- It **is** legal to tell the patient what markers or symptoms they display which have led to the recommended treatment plan or medicine.
- It is **not** legal for homeopaths to inform and discuss with patients a disease or medical condition that they do not know about. However, it is legal for homeopaths to discuss a formerly communicated diagnosis of a disease or medical condition, of which the patient is already aware.

At times, a patient may read between the lines and press the homeopath for a diagnosis. The homeopath must defer to the referring or primary care physician and may respond by saying, "Yes, your laboratory test and other information are consistent with that seen in other patients with <Homeopath to fill in the blank when speaking to the patient>. However, only your physician can provide you with the diagnosis formally once s/he looks at your entire medical history. Consult with your physician on this matter."

Knowing if your patient knows

It is prudent to verify if a diagnosis has already been communicated to the patient. At the beginning of an appointment, a homeopath might inquire, "What brings you here today?", "Who else have you seen regarding this matter?", "What kind of tests have you experienced before?", "What did you find out?", "Has there been any worry about these symptoms or results before this?" These questions allow Registrants to assess a patient's understanding of their condition, whether the condition has been self-diagnosed, and why the patient has been referred or chosen to visit a homeopath.

If you discover that your patient is not aware of or denies their diagnosis, you must consider what information he/she needs in order to make an informed decision about homeopathic care without communicating the medical diagnosis.

RELEVANT COMPETENCIES AND PERFORMANCE INDICATORS

*Note to Readers: The performance indicators listed below each competency are examples of the possible indicators which demonstrate performance consistent with the competency. The list of performance indicators is not exhaustive. For complete information please refer to College documents *Competency Profile for Entry-to-Practice Homeopaths Practising in Ontario* (February 27, 2012) and *Performance Indicators* (March 2012).*

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 plan.

DEFINITIONS

For the purpose of this standard, the following definitions apply:

Communicating a Homeopathic Assessment

Explaining why a remedy was chosen.



Communicating a Medical Diagnosis

Communicating a diagnosis indicate with a high degree of probability that the patient's symptoms and test results conclude the presence of a specific disease or disorder. The communication of a diagnosis to a patient in the course of health care delivery in Ontario is a controlled act under the *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991*.

Homeopath

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

Homeopathic Assessment

The homeopath collects information about the patient's mental, emotional, physical and general symptoms. This is done through observation and dialogue, and may include physical examination and the use of laboratory data. The homeopath will match the patient's symptoms with those of a remedy contained within Medical Medica. This will result in a remedy choice.

Homeopathic Diagnosis

The process of establishing meaningful totality from the patient's signs and symptoms directed from mental, emotional, and physical signs and symptoms, past and present symptoms, acute and chronic states, physical pathologies and life experience. (Castro, 1996)

Medical Diagnosis

The act or process of identifying or determining the nature and cause of a disease (such as those identified in *Diagnostic and Statistical Manual of Mental Disorders (DSM)* and *International Classification of a Diseases*) or injury through evaluation of patient history, examination and review of laboratory data. A medical diagnosis is also the opinion derived from such an evaluation.⁴

Registrant

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

LEGISLATIVE CONTEXT

Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991, S.O. 1991, CHAPTER 18, s. 27(2)

Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991, S.O. 1991, CHAPTER 18, Sched. 2, s. 95 (1)(g)

Health Care Consent Act, 1996, S.O. 1996, Chapter 2

RELATED STANDARDS

#3 Guideline on Inter-professional Collaboration

#10 Standard of Practice on Informed Consent

#1 Guideline on Record Keeping and Privacy of Information

SOURCE

College of Chiropractors of Ontario, Standard of Practice: S-008 February 28, 1998

College of Dietitians of Ontario

College of Massage Therapists of Ontario

Transitional Council of the College of Naturopaths of Ontario

⁴ <http://www.thefreedictionary.com>