



College of Chiropractors of Ontario
L'Ordre des Chiropraticiens de l'Ontario

President's Message #4 re: COVID-19 - Tuesday, March 24, 2020

Recently, the [Ontario government's list](#) of what it is defining as "essential" workplaces was released. The government has [ordered the closing down of non-essential workplaces](#) as of March 24, 2020 at 11:59 p.m. As many of you will have already noted, Section 58 of the list refers to "Health care professionals providing emergency care including dentists, optometrists and physiotherapists."

While chiropractors are not explicitly mentioned in this list, the term 'including' is non-exclusive. Let me be clear: It is our understanding as regulated health care professionals in the province of Ontario that chiropractors constitute an important segment of the unnamed, but included, health professionals referred to in Section 58 of the list. Chiropractors play an important and vital role in maintaining the health of Ontarians, including those working on the front lines.

Following on from the CCO directives contained in my previous communications outlining essential versus non-essential services, let me offer the following with respect to the "emergency care" directive in today's announcement.

Consistent with many other health regulatory college positions on this matter, what constitutes emergency care is largely dependent on the individual practitioner's knowledge, skill and judgment. Please note, members need to weigh the value of treatment against the risk when seeing a patient. However, for chiropractic, emergency care would include:

- Care for patients experiencing a sudden and debilitating change in functional abilities (understood as walking, standing, sitting, lifting floor-to-waist or waist-to-shoulder, stair climbing, ladder climbing) or significant restrictions (experienced during bending/twisting, repetitive movement, pushing/pulling with right/left arm) as well as injury to head/neck/back and extremities.
- Treatment aimed at alleviating significant pain, understood as pain that is incapacitating for the patient and interferes with their ability to carry out normal functioning.

Therefore, and in line with this most recent directive from the Province of Ontario, chiropractors must until further notice practise **only emergency care** as described above.

Note that the Ontario Government's order does not preclude the provision of work and services either online by *telephone or by mail/delivery*. CCO is currently developing further guidelines on this topic, however members intending to provide virtual or remote services may act in accordance with the following protocols:

- A member must have a pre-existing relationship with the patient which would have included an in-person examination, plan of care and informed consent with that patient.
- As part of that plan of care, a member may communicate certain information, advice and recommendations to the patient that are within the chiropractic scope of practice and in the public domain.
- A member must ensure they are competent to perform remote services, have appropriate malpractice insurance or protection for providing remote services and consider the benefits and risks for any information, advice and recommendations that are provided remotely.
- A member must obtain informed consent from the patient relevant to any services that are provided remotely. This may be obtained verbally and documented in the patient health record.
- A member must document any services that are offered remotely in the patient health record, financial record and invoice.
- A member must communicate any fee to a patient that is to be charged for any remote services.
- A member must comply with all CCO regulations, standards of practice, policies and guidelines.

CCO recognizes the important role chiropractors - practising emergency care within the chiropractic scope of practice and respecting all CCO standards of practice, policies and guidelines - can play in helping to mitigate the anticipated demand on hospital and clinic resources bracing for the surge in COVID-19 related illnesses.

Treating patients who are presenting with urgent neuromusculoskeletal pain and disability within our own clinical practices, respecting physical distancing and with the highest level of hygiene protocols, and honouring the prohibition on non-essential travel outside our professional roles, will assist in the province's efforts to manage the impact of this serious pandemic.

Continue to watch the CCO website for updates as the situation is changing rapidly.



Dr. Dennis Mizel, President

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