



Laboratory and other Diagnostic Testing Referral

As primary health care providers, naturopathic physicians focus upon diagnosing and treating diseases, disorders and conditions in the course of managing a client's health care as well as having an emphasis upon disease and injury prevention and assisting the patient to achieve an optimal state of health.

(Definitions: A critical value is a laboratory result that suggests the presence of physiological state that is life threatening. Critical results are a discrete subset of abnormal test results that require immediate action by the laboratory and the clinician.

-from Critical Values Consensus Statement: Proposed, BC Association of Laboratory Physicians and BC Society of Clinical Chemists, 2001.)

Standards

Standard 1

Naturopathic physicians diagnose and manage diseases, disorders and conditions within naturopathic physicians' scope of practice and individual competence within that scope of practice.

Standard 2

Naturopathic physicians consider best practice guidelines and other relevant guidelines and resources in diagnosing and management of diseases, disorders and conditions including when recommending complementary and alternative health therapies.

Standard 3

Naturopathic physicians have an ethical obligation to be available to receive critical test results for their established patients on a 24-hour basis either personally or through ongoing call schedules. Call schedules regarding critical laboratory results are made at the level of the practice setting. When a naturopathic physician signs off to an alternative provider, there must be mutual agreement and willingness on the part of the alternative provider as to when and how the provider will assume the responsibility for the patient's care with regard to critical test results.

In remote communities where there may be few providers, registrants should seek to make specific coverage arrangements with providers in neighboring communities where possible and appropriate.

It is particularly important that the naturopathic physician or designated alternative provider be available to receive personal notification by laboratory physicians or designated laboratory/diagnostic facility staff of critical results for their patients' laboratory tests or other diagnostic tests. In the event that an answering service is used as a partial solution in geographic areas where there are limited providers, procedures must include that the naturopathic physician or designated alternative provider is to be contacted personally in the event a laboratory or diagnostic facility is trying to reach them concerning a critical result. Laboratories or diagnostic facilities should be informed of alternate providers' contact numbers for personal notification of critical results.

Standard 4

Naturopathic physicians refer patients to an allopathic physician at any point in time as deemed necessary in accordance with College's Standards regarding Physician Consultation and Referral.

Standard 5

Naturopathic physicians order diagnostic services and provide appropriate follow-up that is consistent with naturopathic physicians' scope of practice and individual competence within that scope of practice.

Limits and Conditions on Diagnostic Referral

Naturopathic physicians, in the course of providing primary health care, order diagnostic services. Naturopathic physicians are trained in the use of laboratory testing and use laboratory testing. The following limits and conditions apply.

Laboratory Services

- Naturopathic physicians are fully authorized to order all laboratory tests as set out in the Medical Services Commission (MSC) payment schedule under the following conditions:
- Naturopathic physicians are expected to comply with all MSC guidelines, billing rules (where applicable) and patterns of practice that apply to family practice physicians as outlined in MSC payment schedule 40: Laboratory Medicine.(Reference: http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/msp/infoprac/physbilling/payschedule/pdf/40_laboratory_medicine.pdf)
- Naturopathic physicians are required to utilize appropriate laboratory testing in accordance with their training, scope of practice and individual level of competence.

- Naturopathic physicians utilize laboratory services from out of province laboratories where necessary to ensure safe and appropriate treatment for their patients.
- Naturopathic physicians must inform their patients that laboratory tests are not currently covered by MSP when ordered by a naturopathic physician.
- Naturopathic Physicians may order additional tests that are not set out in the MSC payment schedule, in accordance with commonly accepted naturopathic practice, so long as appropriate arrangements regarding such testing and payment for services have been made with the laboratory providing such testing.

Diagnostic Imaging Services

- Naturopathic physicians are authorized by the Naturopathic Physicians Regulation to order X-rays and ultrasounds.
- Queries regarding out of province referral for X-rays and ultrasounds should be referred to the Registrar's office and will be considered by the Pharmacopoeia and Diagnostic Referral Committee where appropriate.
- Ultrasound is authorized for use under the Naturopathic Physicians Regulation. However, while ultrasound may be used for information purposes only within a naturopathic physician's office practice, for diagnostic purposes ultrasound testing must be performed under the auspices of a radiologist and test results must only be interpreted by a radiologist for such diagnostic purposes. Naturopathic physicians do not take responsibility for final interpretation of diagnostic imaging studies.
- In many cases, due to current policies, this may require the naturopathic physician to refer their patient to a family or general practice M.D. who is authorized to make a referral to a radiology clinic in BC.
- For any diagnostic imaging study that the patient wishes to have covered by MSP, the patient must currently have a referral from an M.D. for diagnostic imaging.
- Naturopathic physicians must inform patients that diagnostic imaging is not covered by MSP when ordered by a naturopathic physician.
- Naturopathic physicians are not currently authorized to order CT (CAT) scans or MRI's under the Naturopathic Physicians Regulation.

Naturopathic doctors with questions about their obligations regarding immunization may contact the College at 604-688-8236 or questions@cnphc.bc.ca.

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