

2020-03-27 COVID-19 Update - Essential services and unproven therapies

Essential services

The Ministry of Health has designated some health services, including naturopaths, an essential service (<https://www2.gov.bc.ca/gov/content/safety/emergency-preparedness-response-recovery/covid-19-provincial-support/essential-services-covid-19#healthservices>). According to the Ministry of Health webpage on COVID-19 essential services, “essential services should and are encouraged to remain open. They must, however, follow the orders and guidance provided by the PHO to ensure safe operations and reduce the risk of transmission of COVID-19.”

The expectations outlined in PHO Dr. Bonnie Henry’s [recent letter to health professionals](#) remain in effect.

As the Provincial Health Officer’s orders and guidance remain in effect, the CNPBC continues to recommend that all naturopathic doctors suspend all elective and non-essential naturopathic services or provide services for both essential and non-essential needs by telemedicine in a manner consistent with the Telemedicine Standard (<http://www.cnpbc.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/Telemedicine.pdf>) as well as the Code of Conduct and Code of Ethics (<http://www.cnpbc.bc.ca/wp-content/uploads/Code-of-Conduct-and-Code-of-Ethics-2018-10-16.pdf>) in order to minimize risk of transmission.

In the exceptional case that it is necessary to see a patient in person – for example, if a patient is at risk of imminent and/or serious harm that cannot be addressed by other means – naturopathic doctors must strictly follow the infection prevention and control guidelines for health professionals provided by the BCCDC: <http://www.bccdc.ca/health-professionals/clinical-resources/covid-19-care/infection-control>.

Unproven therapies

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to have a profound impact on patients, the general public, and health professionals. You may be aware of online and social media-driven conversations about the use of antimalarial, antibiotic, antiviral, homeopathic, IV vitamin, and other therapies to treat and/or prevent COVID-19.

The CNPBC wishes to caution registrants about the inappropriateness and potential harms of providing and/or promoting unproven treatments, substances, and/or drugs with claims that they may treat, cure, or “boost immunity” to COVID-19.

While the dissemination of inaccurate information, incomplete information, and/or misinformation regarding public health is always harmful, it is particularly dangerous at this pivotal time. It is critically important that members of the public understand and follow recommendations about COVID-19 as provided by public health authorities. Information from healthcare professionals that confuses, dilutes, distracts from, or otherwise interferes with that messaging may cause significant and even catastrophic harm to individuals and to society.

Although all British Columbians are hopeful a cure or treatment can be found quickly, **at this time a proven treatment for COVID-19 does not exist.**

In a recently-posted position statement on unproven therapies for COVID-19, the BC Centre for Disease Control states: “*It is important to understand that there are potential harms to the patient, risks to our understanding of what is truly a beneficial treatment or not, and depleting access to therapies known to be helpful or essential in other disease states. For these reasons, the use of unproven therapies for COVID-19 is not recommended outside clinical trials.*”

The link to this statement is available here: http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Professionals-Site/Documents/Recommendation_Unproven_Therapies_COVID-19.pdf

In the coming weeks, it is likely that the COVID-19 pandemic will cause uncertainty, fear, hardship, loss, and grief to many people. More British Columbians will become infected and, tragically, more may die from this virus. Pressure from patients, fellow healthcare professionals, and even friends and family to help access unproven therapies for COVID-19 will undoubtedly increase.

Naturopathic doctors have a responsibility to the public, to patients, and to their professions to communicate information about COVID-19 responsibly, and not to yield to pressure to suggest or attempt unproven and potentially dangerous uses of medications and treatments.

Any statements by naturopathic doctors about prevention and/or treatment of COVID-19 apart from information made available by the public health authorities are inappropriate, potentially harmful, and likely to violate the CNPBC's [Advertising Policy](#), [Immunization Standard](#), and/or [Codes of Ethics and Conduct](#). When brought to the attention of the CNPBC, such statements will be forwarded to the Inquiry Committee for investigation, and the registrant may face serious regulatory consequences.

For more information on the unproven therapies for COVID-19, see the BCCDC's guideline: http://www.bccdc.ca/Health-Professionals-Site/Documents/Guidelines_Unproven_Therapies_COVID-19.pdf.