

# Newfoundland and Labrador Pharmacy Board



## Code of Ethics

September 2014

Last Revised March 2021

## **Preamble**

Pharmacy professionals play a pivotal role in the continuum of health care provided to patients. The responsibility that comes with being an essential health resource is significant. To retain the high level of trust and respect that is given to pharmacists and pharmacy technicians by patients, the public and other health professionals, pharmacists and pharmacy technicians must be both competent and professional in all they do. As professionals, pharmacists and pharmacy technicians are expected to abide by a higher standard of conduct.

Ethics are the foundation for professional behavior, actions and attitudes. The Newfoundland and Labrador Pharmacy Board Code of Ethics reflects what the pharmacy profession stands for and reinforces what is unique about the contribution registrants make to patients, to society and to their professions. Consistent ethical behavior creates a positive image of the individual that extends to the image of the profession. In contrast, unethical practices and decisions create a negative image of and diminish trust and credibility about the individual and raise suspicion about the profession.

The Code of Ethics supports the NLPB in fulfilling its mandate to protect the public, enables the NLPB to provide direction to registrants faced with ethical dilemmas and serves as a benchmark for monitoring and addressing registrants' conduct.

### **Ethical Principles**

1. Registrants hold the health and safety of each patient to be of primary consideration.
2. Registrants maintain a professional relationship with each patient.
3. Registrants respect the autonomy, values, and dignity of each patient.
4. Registrants respect and protect the patient's right to confidentiality.
5. Registrants respect the patient's right to receive care.
6. Registrants observe the law, preserve high professional standards, and uphold the dignity and honour of the profession.
7. Registrants continuously improve their professional knowledge and skills.
8. Registrants cooperate with colleagues and other health care professionals to ensure optimal patient-centred care.
9. Registrants contribute to the health care system and to societal health needs.
10. Registrants act to enhance and nurture the profession of pharmacy.

## **Guidelines for Application**

### **1. Registrants hold the health and safety of each patient to be of primary consideration.**

- 1.1. Registrants place the health and well-being of their patients at the centre of their practice.
- 1.2. Registrants provide appropriate treatment and care.
- 1.3. Registrants use their specialized knowledge and skills to make informed decisions that are in the best interest of their patients, and the public.
- 1.4. Registrants are aware of the limitations of their knowledge and expertise, and practice only within the scope of their education, training, and competence.
- 1.5. Registrants provide prescription and non-prescription medications, services, and health-related products that are safe, effective, and of good quality.
- 1.6. Registrants advocate for, and protect, the well-being of each patient, especially those who are vulnerable or disenfranchised.
- 1.7. Registrants take all reasonable steps to prevent harm to patients.

### **2. Registrants maintain a professional relationship with each patient<sup>1</sup>.**

- 2.1. Registrants respect the professional relationship with the patient, and act with honesty, integrity, and compassion in order to foster the patient's trust and confidence in the registrant.
- 2.2. Registrants treat all those they serve with courtesy and respect.
- 2.3. Registrants listen to patients to seek understanding of the patient's needs, values, and desired health goals.
- 2.4. Registrants engage in patient-centred care and encourage patients to participate in decisions regarding their health.
- 2.5. Registrants recognize the power imbalance in the registrant-patient relationship and maintain appropriate professional boundaries with patients.
- 2.6. Registrants act in the best interests of their patients and do not exploit the registrant-patient relationship for any personal gain.
- 2.7. Registrants limit treatment of themselves, or immediate family members, to only minor conditions, emergency circumstances or situations when another appropriate health professional is not readily available in a reasonable timeframe.

### **3. Registrants respect the autonomy, values and dignity of each patient.**

- 3.1. Registrants recognize and respect that each patient has different needs, beliefs, values, experiences, and preferences that will influence their attitudes towards health care and their desired health goals.
- 3.2. Registrants provide their patients with information that is truthful, accurate, objective, and understandable so that the patients are able to make informed choices about their health care.
- 3.3. Registrants do not discriminate against any patient on grounds such as race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, social origin, religious creed, religion, age, disability, disfigurement, sex, sexual

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<sup>1</sup> See NLPB *Interpretation Guide – Ending the Pharmacist-Patient Relationship*: <https://nlpb.ca/media/Interpretation-Guide-Ending-the-Pharmacist-Patient-Relationship-May2018.pdf>

orientation, gender identity, gender expression, marital status, family status, source of income, political opinion, medical condition, or on any basis proscribed by law.

- 3.4. Registrants respect patients' dignity and seek to involve them, along with their agent or caregiver, if appropriate, in decisions regarding their health.
- 3.5. Registrants respect the right of patients to make informed decisions about their care including the choice to refuse treatment, care, or professional services.

#### **4. Registrants respect and protect the patient's right to confidentiality.**

- 4.1. Registrants understand, respect, and comply with all relevant legislation, standards, and policies pertaining to the privacy, confidentiality, collection, and storage of personal health information<sup>2</sup>.
- 4.2. Registrants obtain informed consent from patients when collecting personal health information, including informing patients of the purposes for collecting the information, any potential uses of the information, and who may have access to it.
- 4.3. Registrants collect or access personal health information only for the purposes of providing care to the patient.
- 4.4. Registrants protect and keep confidential all information acquired in the course of their practice.
- 4.5. Registrants use, or disclose, personal health information only for the purposes for which it was collected, except with the consent of the patient, or as required by law.
- 4.6. Before using, or disclosing, personal health information, registrants take reasonable steps to ensure that the information is accurate, complete, and up-to-date.
- 4.7. Registrants take reasonable steps to ensure that communications with, or about, patients take place in a way that preserves patient confidentiality.
- 4.8. Registrants avoid public discussion or comments about patients that could reasonably be seen to be revealing confidential, or identifying, information<sup>3</sup>.

#### **5. Registrants respect the patient's right to receive care.**

- 5.1. Registrants take all reasonable steps to provide appropriate medications and services to their patients.
- 5.2. Registrants who are unable to provide appropriate medications or services to their patients take reasonable steps to ensure patient care is not jeopardized.
- 5.3. Registrants who are unable to provide medications or services to patients due to a conscientious objection, including personal, moral, or religious reasons, inform pharmacy management of their objections at the earliest possible opportunity, and ensure that each patient receives assistance in obtaining the medication or service from another pharmacist or health professional within a timeframe fitting the patient's needs.
- 5.4. Registrants play a role in assisting patients in navigating the health care system, including referring them to other appropriate health care providers, services, and community resources, as needed.

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<sup>2</sup> The primary legislation pertaining to personal health information in NL is the *Personal Health Information Act*, available at: <https://www.assembly.nl.ca/Legislation/sr/statutes/p07-01.htm>

<sup>3</sup> Also see NLPB *Practice Policy – Registrant Use of Social Media*: <https://nlpb.ca/media/Practice-Policy-Registrant-Use-of-Social-Media-May2018.pdf>

- 5.5. Registrants continue to provide care to their patients until the services are no longer wanted or required, until another provider has assumed responsibility for the patient, or until the registrant has provided reasonable notice of termination of the relationship<sup>4</sup>.
- 5.6. Registrants plan for continuity of care to their patients in the event of conscientious objection, labour disputes, pharmacy relocation or closure, natural disasters, or other situations where continuity of care may be interrupted.

**6. Registrants observe the law, preserve high professional standards and uphold the dignity and honour of the profession.**

- 6.1. Registrants obey the laws, regulations, standards, and policies of the profession, both in letter and in spirit.
- 6.2. Registrants embrace the ethical principles of the profession, and do not engage in activity that will undermine public trust in, or bring discredit to, the profession.
- 6.3. Registrants do not practice under conditions which compromise their freedom to exercise professional judgment, or which cause a deterioration of the quality of care to their patients.
- 6.4. Registrants recognize that professional obligations override management policies, and take all reasonable steps to resolve situations where management policies and professional obligations are in conflict.
- 6.5. Registrants do not jeopardize another registrant's ability to provide optimal patient care, or to obey the laws, regulations, standards, and policies of the profession.
- 6.6. Registrants do not enter into arrangements that undermine, or could reasonably be perceived to undermine, their own or another health professional's judgement.
- 6.7. Registrants do not offer inducements to any person or entity that are conditional on, or related to, a patient obtaining medications or services from the registrant<sup>5</sup>.
- 6.8. Registrants do not participate in advertising or promotion that is outside of the boundaries of the law, or that diminishes the dignity and honour of the profession<sup>6</sup>.
- 6.9. Registrants act with honesty and transparency in the event of an error or adverse event.
- 6.10. Registrants do not seek more than fair and reasonable remuneration for their services.
- 6.11. Registrants have a responsibility to protect and maintain their physical and mental health and well-being, and seek care and support, as appropriate.
- 6.12. Registrants must discontinue their provision of professional services if their physical or mental health, including use of drugs or alcohol, poses a risk of harm.

**7. Registrants continuously improve their professional knowledge and skills.**

- 7.1. Registrants are responsible for continually assessing their professional knowledge and skills, and identifying their learning needs.

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<sup>4</sup> See NLPB *Interpretation Guide – Ending the Pharmacist-Patient Relationship*: <https://nlpb.ca/media/Interpretation-Guide-Ending-the-Pharmacist-Patient-Relationship-May2018.pdf>

<sup>5</sup> See NLPB *Interpretation Guide – Prohibition on Inducements*: <https://nlpb.ca/media/Interpretation-Guide-Inducements-Mar2021.pdf>

<sup>6</sup> See NLPB *Interpretation Guide – Advertising and Promotion*: <https://nlpb.ca/media/Interpretation-Guide-Advertising-Promotion-Feb2022.pdf>

- 7.2. Registrants engage in lifelong learning to maintain and improve professional knowledge and skills.
- 7.3. Registrants respond constructively to the outcomes of quality assurance assessments, as well as other evaluations and reviews of their professional performance, and undertake additional education and training, when required.

**8. Registrants cooperate with colleagues and other health care professionals to ensure optimal patient-centred care.**

- 8.1. Registrants act with honesty and integrity when interacting with colleagues and other health professionals.
- 8.2. Registrants respect the values and abilities of colleagues and other health care professionals.
- 8.3. Registrants consult with colleagues or other health care professionals, when appropriate, to benefit the patient.
- 8.4. Registrants refer their patients to other health care professionals or agencies, when appropriate.
- 8.5. Registrants work collaboratively, and maintain professional relationships, with pharmacy colleagues to ensure patients' needs are met when transferring prescriptions, inventory, etc.
- 8.6. Registrants seek opportunities to work collaboratively with other health care professionals to foster a collaborative approach to health care and professional development.

**9. Registrants contribute to the health care system and to societal health needs.**

- 9.1. Registrants promote health, wellness, and disease prevention.
- 9.2. Registrants promote positive changes in the health care system by actively participating in health policy development, review, and revision.
- 9.3. Registrants support cost-effective therapies, the rational use of medications and services, and the prudent use of health care resources.
- 9.4. Registrants promote fair and equitable access to health care resources and services.
- 9.5. Registrants recognize how the inappropriate use of medication can negatively impact patients, the general public, and the health care system, and participate in activities that prevent such harms whenever possible.
- 9.6. Registrants serve as a health resource for patients and participate in programs to educate the public about health.
- 9.7. Registrants take appropriate measures to mitigate potential public risks that may arise from their practice decisions.
- 9.8. Registrants are accessible during public health emergencies to provide care to patients, and mitigate further health risks.
- 9.9. Registrants foster the advancement of knowledge by supporting scientifically, and ethically, valid research.
- 9.10. Registrants support environmental stewardship by promoting safe disposal of drugs and other health products.

## **10. Registrants act to enhance and nurture the profession of pharmacy.**

- 10.1. Registrants contribute to the ongoing development of the profession by participating in the education and training of students and interns.
- 10.2. Registrants recognize that self-regulation is a privilege, and that they have an ongoing responsibility to uphold the principles associated with this privilege, and to support the public protection mandate of the Newfoundland and Labrador Pharmacy Board.
- 10.3. Registrants recognize, and avoid whenever possible, conflicts of interest<sup>7</sup> that may arise in the course of their work. If conflicts of interest do arise and cannot be avoided, they should be disclosed and addressed as soon as possible.
- 10.4. Registrants raise concern with colleagues, pharmacy management, or the appropriate authorities if policies, systems, working conditions, or the actions, performance or health of others have the potential to compromise patient care or public safety, or are in conflict with the laws, regulations, standards, or policies of the profession.
- 10.5. Registrants abide by their duty to report<sup>8</sup> knowledge of professional misconduct, professional incompetence, incapacity, or unfitness to practice, conduct unbecoming, or any breach of the legislation, regulations, or Code of Ethics by another registrant to the Registrar.
- 10.6. Registrants cooperate with representatives of the Newfoundland and Labrador Pharmacy Board, respond to inquiries in a timely manner, and participate in assessments and investigations, in the interests of public protection.

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<sup>7</sup> A conflict of interest may include personal, financial, or business circumstances that may impair, or be perceived to impair, the registrant's ability to act in the best interest of the patient or to meet professional responsibilities.

<sup>8</sup> See section 58. of the *Pharmacy Act, 2012*: <https://www.assembly.nl.ca/Legislation/sr/statutes/p12-2.htm#58>