
VIRTUAL CARE

Draft Guideline G-015

Quality Assurance Committee

Approved by Council for Distribution and Feedback: June 21, 2023



Note to readers: In the event of any inconsistency between this document and the legislation that affects chiropractic practice, the legislation governs.

INTENT

To set the expectations for members providing virtual care to patients based on existing legislation, regulation, standards of practice, policies and guidelines.

DESCRIPTION OF GUIDELINE

Definitions

Virtual care, also known as telecare, is the delivery of chiropractic care and services, using a virtual or telecommunication platform, where the patient is not in-person.

Registration Requirements

Members must be registered as a chiropractor in Ontario in the General (i.e., active) class of registration to provide virtual care to patients in Ontario.

Clinical Competency

Members who provide virtual care must ensure they have achieved, maintain, and can demonstrate clinical competency in all aspects of virtual care.

Limitations of Virtual Care

In providing virtual care services, a member must use their professional judgment to determine:

- whether virtual care is the most appropriate method to deliver services, considering the circumstances;
- whether an in-person examination is required to determine a diagnosis, clinical impression and/or treatment plan;
- where the patient has the physical, sensory, language, cognitive and technological capabilities to be able to participate in virtual care services; and
- whether there are risks, contra-indications or limitations to performing virtual care that outweigh the benefits for the patient.

A member must understand and acknowledge the limitations of virtual care, specifically with respect to: communication with patients, limitations to the performance of examination or assessment, limitations to providing a definitive diagnosis (in which case a clinical impression may be more appropriate), and recognition that no hands-on assessment or care, including a chiropractic adjustment or manipulation, can be provided. Virtual care services may include recommending and monitoring of appropriate exercises, recommending appropriate devices or supports, advice on ergonomics, nutrition, hot/cold therapies, lifestyle and home care.

If a member uses their professional judgment to determine that a patient may benefit from in-person examination or care, they should make that recommendation to the patient and/or provide an appropriate referral.

Standards and Expectations of Virtual Care

All relevant legislation, regulations, standards of practice, policies and guidelines apply to a member's performance of virtual care. This includes, but is not limited to the following:

- The member must ensure a safe, secure and confidential platform is being used for virtual care, and is used with the patient's authorization.
- The member is required to maintain the privacy of personal health information in accordance with the *Personal Health Information Protection Act, 2004* and CCO standards of practice, policies and guidelines, including the use of technological safeguards, cyber security protections, secure transmission and storage systems and mechanisms, password protection for any devices and physical safeguards to prevent unauthorized use. Please see the ["Privacy and Security Considerations for Virtual Health Care Visits"](#) document from the Ontario Information and Privacy Commissioner for further guidelines.
- The member must perform patient intake, assessment and examination, document informed consent as obtained in accordance with Standard of Practice S-013: Consent, and perform timely re-assessments.

Professional Liability Protection or Insurance

A member must ensure they have professional liability protection or insurance consistent with CCO by-laws that applies to virtual care.

Record Keeping and Billing Practices

A member must maintain patient health records and billings practices consistent with CCO standards of practice, policies and guidelines, that explicitly indicate that the services provided were virtual care. The financial record and invoices for virtual care must clearly indicate that the care being billed for was virtual care and who provided the care.

A member must discuss with the patient, in advance of examination and care, fees and payments for virtual care, and ensure that the patient has agreed to any fees and payment for virtual care.

A member should advise their patients to confirm with their insurer or third-party payor whether virtual chiropractic care is covered.

Jurisdiction

The regulation of health care is provincially regulated and under Ontario legislation. Therefore, a member should limit the initiation of the provision of virtual care to patients who are living in Ontario or who have a permanent address in Ontario.

There may be circumstances where a member may continue to provide virtual care to a patient who is out of Ontario, for the purposes of continuity of care. However, a member must consider that other provinces and countries may require registration in their jurisdiction to deliver any virtual health care services to a patient living or visiting that jurisdiction. It is the responsibility of a member to ensure that they are complying with any legal or regulatory requirements in the jurisdiction where a patient is receiving virtual care. A member should also ensure that their professional liability protection or insurance provides coverage for a patient receiving virtual care while out of Ontario.

If a patient is out of Ontario for a long period of time or has permanently moved out of Ontario, the member should advise the patient to find a chiropractor in the jurisdiction in which they will residing.