

Disclosure of Harm

Standards of Practice of the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta (“the College”) are the minimum standards of professional behavior and ethical conduct expected of all regulated members registered in Alberta. Standards of Practice are enforceable under the *Health Professions Act* and will be referenced in the management of complaints and in discipline hearings. The College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta also provides **Advice to the Profession** to support the implementation of the Standards of Practice.

- (1) When a patient suffers harm, with harm being defined as an outcome that negatively affects the patient’s health and/or quality of life, the responsible physician must ensure that the patient receives disclosure of that information.
 - (a) If the physician is the only healthcare professional treating the patient, then it is the physician’s responsibility to disclose that information to the patient.
 - (b) In a team setting, the physician must cooperate with other members of the team (in the hospital setting this will also include the administration) to identify the most suitable person(s) to disclose that information to the patient.
 - (c) In all settings, disclosure of harm is to be considered part of a process that will also address the patient’s immediate and future medical needs, the investigation (if required) of the circumstances that led to the patient suffering harm, and necessary steps to prevent recurrence of the harm if an untoward and avoidable event occurred.
- (2) Disclosure must occur whether the harm is a result of progression of disease, a complication of care or an adverse event and whether the harm was preventable.

Terms used in the Standards of Practice:

- *Physician* means any person who is registered or who is required to be registered as a member of this College. The College regulates physicians, surgeons and osteopaths.
- *Must* refers to a mandatory requirement.
- *May* means that the physician may exercise reasonable discretion.
- *Patient* includes, where applicable, the patient’s legal guardian or substitute decision maker.