

College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta Position Statement on Racism and Discrimination

Speaking directly to Black people and others of African descent, Indigenous peoples, ethnic and racialized individuals, and all those who have been recipients of any form of discriminatory or oppressive acts in the healthcare system, we are aware that our words, while well-intended, cannot make meaningful or lasting impressions unless they translate into effective action that would help to heal the wounds of the past and, more importantly, prevent further injury in the future. You have been seen and heard. We ask that you give us the opportunity to start over, engage with us, and help us develop standards and policies that will support more equitable and inclusive health care for all Albertans.

Our Role

The College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta (CPSA) is responsible for setting standards that describe the expectations of all regulated members to demonstrate competence and professionalism.

The CMA Code of Ethics and Professionalism requires regulated members to:

- Accept the patient without discrimination (such as on the basis of age, disability, gender identity or expression, genetic characteristics, language, marital and family status, medical condition, national or ethnic origin, political affiliation, race, religion, sex, sexual orientation, or socioeconomic status). (Clause C1)¹
- Treat colleagues with dignity and as persons worthy of respect. Colleagues include all learners, healthcare partners, and members of the healthcare team. (Clause C31)²
- Commit to collaborative and respectful relationships with Indigenous patients and communities through efforts to understand and implement the recommendations relevant to health care made in the report of the Truth and Reconciliation Commission of Canada. (Clause C43)³
- Contribute, individually and in collaboration with others, to improving health care services and delivery to address systemic issues that affect the health of the patient and of populations, with particular attention to disadvantaged, vulnerable, or underserved communities. (Clause C44)⁴

¹ *Code of Ethics and Professionalism*, Canadian Medical Association, 2018, p. 4

² *Code of Ethics and Professionalism*, Canadian Medical Association, 2018, p. 6

³ *Code of Ethics and Professionalism*, Canadian Medical Association, 2018, p. 7

⁴ *Code of Ethics and Professionalism*, Canadian Medical Association, 2018, p. 7

Our Position

Racism and discrimination exist in health care. Racist and discriminatory policies and practices persist. Racism and discrimination in health care take many forms: caregiver to patient, patient to caregiver, caregiver to caregiver, individual and systemic, subtle and overt, and deliberate and unconscious. Racism and discrimination negatively impact the physical, mental, emotional and spiritual health of patients, caregivers and learners, and lead to erosion of trust and confidence in the healthcare system. Ultimately, racism and discrimination result in decreased quality of care and poor health outcomes.

CPSA stands against racism and discrimination in all forms. Racism and discrimination violate our Code of Ethics and Professionalism. Racism and discrimination constitute unprofessional conduct.

Our Commitment

CPSA is committed to taking action against individual and systemic acts of racism and discrimination in our own workplace and in our work as a regulator. We are committed to working in partnership with those with lived experience to dismantle racism and discrimination, and challenge oppression in health care.

Our Path Forward

To help us in our commitment, we have established two advisory groups, the Indigenous Health Advisory Circle and the Anti-Racism Anti-Discrimination Action Advisory Committee. These groups will help ensure the path forward for CPSA and our regulated members is informed by those who have experienced racism and discrimination. Council members will be involved in each group.

We recognize we will be called upon to reflect on how our own biases and attitudes impact our work and contribute to the perpetuation of racism and discrimination. We also recognize we will need to unlearn and learn, and have difficult conversations, if we are going to make any real change.

We are committed to engaging with, listening to, and learning from our Advisory Circle and Action Advisory Committee members and others with lived experience. And we are looking forward to implementing what we learn.

We call on all CPSA Council members, CPSA team members and CPSA regulated members to follow this path with us. Working together, we will work to realize change and influence a culture of equity, diversity and inclusion in our organization, in the medical profession and in the delivery of safe, quality anti-racist and anti-discriminatory health care to Albertans.

Glossary

Discrimination: Treating someone unfairly by either imposing a burden on them, or denying them a privilege, benefit or opportunity enjoyed by others, because of their race, religious beliefs, color, gender, gender identity, gender expression, disability, age, ancestry, place of origin, marital status, source of income, family status, or sexual orientation.^{5,6}

Racism: Racism is an ideology that either directly or indirectly asserts that one group is inherently superior to others. It can be openly displayed in racial jokes and slurs or hate crimes but it can be more deeply rooted in attitudes, values and stereotypical beliefs. In some cases, these are unconsciously held and have become deeply embedded in systems and institutions that have evolved over time. Racism operates at a number of levels, in particular, individual, systemic and societal.⁷

⁵ Building a Foundation for Change: Canada's Anti-Racism Strategy 2019–2022, Government of Canada; <https://www.canada.ca/en/canadian-heritage/campaigns/anti-racism-engagement/anti-racism-strategy.html#a8>

⁶ Protected areas and grounds under the Alberta Human Rights Act: Information Sheet; https://albertahumanrights.ab.ca/publications/bulletins_sheets_booklets/sheets/history_and_info/Pages/protected_areas_grounds.aspx

⁷ *Racial discrimination, race and racism (fact sheet)*, Ontario Human Rights Commission; <https://www.ohrc.on.ca/en/racial-discrimination-race-and-racism-fact-sheet>