

## FOCUS GROUP PARTICIPANT CONSENT FORM

**Title of Study: Physician Engagement with the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta: A Mixed-Methods Approach.**

**Principal Investigator:**

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You are being invited to take part in a research study. Before you take part, a member of the study team is available to explain the project and you are free to ask any questions about anything you do not understand. You will be given a copy of this form for your records.

### **Why am I being asked to take part in this research study?**

You are invited to participate because you are a physician currently registered and practicing in Alberta. This study is being conducted to better understand physician engagement with CPSA—including how regulation is experienced, what works well, and where improvements are needed.

## **What is the reason for doing the study?**

The goal of this study is to explore Alberta physicians' experiences with CPSA. Findings will help identify opportunities to support professional well-being and effective communication between CPSA and regulated members.

## **What will I be asked to do?**

You will be invited to participate in a virtual focus group discussion via Zoom lasting approximately 60 to 90 minutes. The group will be moderated by a member of the CPSA Research & Evaluation Unit (REVU) and include approximately 5–8 participants.

Topics will include:

- Your experience of interacting with CPSA
- Perspectives on regulatory processes, communication, and support

With your consent, the session will be audio recorded for transcription purposes. The video will not be recorded. Recordings will be used only for analysis and securely deleted after transcription is confirmed.

## **What are the risks and discomforts?**

There are no expected risks to participating. Some discussion topics may prompt reflection on challenging experiences. You may choose to skip any question or leave the session at any time.

It is not possible to know all of the risks that may happen in a study, but the researchers have taken all reasonable safeguards to minimize any known risks to a study participant.

## **What are the benefits to me?**

There may be no direct benefit to you. However, your feedback will help improve CPSA's regulatory approach and engagement with physicians in Alberta.

## **Do I have to take part in the study?**

Being in this study is your choice. If you decide to be in the study, you can change your mind and stop participating in the study at any time before the focus group session begins by contacting Dr. Nicole Kain at [nicole.kain@cpsa.ab.ca](mailto:nicole.kain@cpsa.ab.ca). After that point, we are unable to remove your contributions from the study because of the nature of group discussions, where participants speak in front of others and the conversation builds on shared responses. Once the session has been recorded and transcription has started, removing one participant's responses could affect the overall flow and meaning of the transcript.

This limitation will be explained clearly in the consent form and again at the beginning of each focus group session, so participants are fully informed before deciding to take part.

Although you cannot withdraw your data after the focus group begins, you may choose not to answer any question you are not comfortable with during the discussion.

## **Will I be paid to be in the research?**

Yes. You will receive a \$175 honorarium via electronic transfer as a token of appreciation for your time and expertise, even if you choose to leave the group early.

### **Will my information be kept private?**

During this study, we will do everything we can to ensure that the information you provide is kept private. No information that includes your name will be released or published unless you give us your express permission. However, in rare cases required by law, your information may be reviewed by authorized individuals (e.g., the Research Ethics Board), and we cannot guarantee absolute privacy. Still, we will make every legal effort to protect your confidentiality.

Each participant will be assigned a code (e.g., Participant 1) during transcription to protect their identity. If you would prefer to use a pseudonym of your own choosing or your real name, please let us know on the final page of this form.

The focus group will be conducted on Zoom. With your permission, the session will be audio recorded (video will not be recorded). These audio recordings will be downloaded from Zoom to secure, encrypted CPSA servers immediately after the session and will not remain on Zoom's servers. Only authorized members of the CPSA research team will have access to the recordings.

During research studies it is important that the data we get is accurate. For this reason, your data, including your name, may be looked at by people from the Research Ethics Board.

After transcription is complete and reviewed for accuracy, the original audio recordings will be securely deleted. Transcripts will be stored in a de-identified format on CPSA's internal encrypted servers. All data will be encrypted, password protected, and stored behind CPSA's secure firewall.

In accordance with University of Alberta policy, the data collected will be retained for a minimum of 5 years after the study concludes. At that point, all data will be securely destroyed unless further approval is obtained.

Please be advised that although the researchers will take every precaution to maintain confidentiality of the data, the nature of group discussion prevents the researchers from guaranteeing confidentiality. You are asked to respect the privacy of your fellow participants and not repeat what is said in the group discussion to others outside of the group.

This study does not involve future secondary use or public archiving of identifiable data.

### **What if I have questions?**

If you have any questions about this study, contact Dr. Nicole Kain at [nicole.kain@cpsa.ab.ca](mailto:nicole.kain@cpsa.ab.ca) OR [nkain@ualberta.ca](mailto:nkain@ualberta.ca) . If you have any questions regarding your rights as a research participant, you may contact the University of Alberta Research Ethics Office at [ethics@ualberta.ca](mailto:ethics@ualberta.ca) or (780)492-2615 and quote Ethics ID Pro00153292. This office is independent of the researchers.

### **How do I indicate my agreement to be in this study?**

You will be asked to review and sign this consent form electronically via DocuSign before participating in the focus group. A copy of your signed consent form will be automatically sent to you for your records.

Verbal consent will also be obtained at the beginning of the Zoom focus group session by a member of the research team. The facilitator will review the key points of this consent form and ask for your confirmation before recording begins.

By signing the form via DocuSign and providing your verbal consent at the session, you confirm that:

- You have read the above information and had anything you did not understand explained to your satisfaction.
- You agree to participate in this research study.
- You understand that you may freely withdraw from the study at any time before the focus group begins.
- You do not waive your legal rights by participating.
- You understand that the legal and professional obligations of the researchers and institutions remain unchanged.
- You agree to the secure storage and handling of your data as outlined in this form.

You will sign this form electronically through DocuSign. No physical signature is required.

The electronic version will contain the following required fields:

- Name of Participant
- Pseudonym (optional)
- Signature of Participant (DocuSign electronic signature)
- Date Signed

In DocuSign, you will also see a field completed by the study team:

- Name of Person Obtaining Consent
- Contact Number

A copy of your completed and signed consent form will be automatically emailed to you for your records.

Verbal consent will be reconfirmed at the beginning of the Zoom session.