



# **Ketamine prescribing, administration and oversight expectations**

Prescribing Guidance

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Analytics, Innovation and Research, Physician Prescribing Practices (PPP) Program

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## Background

The College of Physicians & Surgeons of Alberta (CPSA)'s Physician Prescribing Practices (PPP) Program engages physicians with educationally focused advice and collaboration to support safe patient care through better prescribing practices.

## Purpose & scope

This guidance document outlines CPSA's professional expectations for the prescribing, administration and oversight of ketamine in Alberta. It applies to all regulated physicians practicing in Alberta who prescribe, administer or oversee the use of ketamine in any setting, including hospitals, community practices and private or non-hospital clinics.

The purpose of this guidance is to support safe, ethical and evidence-informed use of ketamine while mitigating risks to patients and the public. It addresses both Health Canada-approved uses and off-label uses of ketamine. The guidance also addresses the provision of psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy (PAPT) in provincially licensed and CPSA-accredited facilities.

**This guidance does not create new prescribing authority, approve new indications or replace clinical judgment.** Prescribers remain individually accountable for ensuring that ketamine use complies with:

- Legislation
- CPSA *Standards of Practice*
- CPSA Bylaws
- CPSA Accreditation Standards
- Accepted principles of patient safety, informed consent and documentation

**This guidance document is intended to assist prescribers in understanding:**

- **1.0:** Approved uses in Canada
- **2.0:** Off-label uses
- **3.0:** Alberta's Legislative and Regulatory framework
- **4.0:** Prescribing authority and scope of practice
- **5.0:** Service and setting requirements
- **6.0:** Administrative, documentation and quality assurance requirements
- **7.0:** Professional accountability

**Questions?** For assistance or more information, contact CPSA's Physician Prescribing Practices (PPP) Program at [AIR.Inquiries@cpsa.ab.ca](mailto:AIR.Inquiries@cpsa.ab.ca).

## 1.0 Approved uses in Canada

In Canada, ketamine is approved by Health Canada for use as **an anesthetic agent**. Ketamine is controlled under [Schedule I of the \*Controlled Drugs and Substances Act\*](#).

The approved uses are typically supported by established dosing protocols, monitoring standards and institutional oversight. Use of ketamine outside these approved indications is considered **off-label** and carries additional professional and legal responsibilities.

### 1.1 Approved uses for Esketamine nasal spray (SPRAVATO®)

**Esketamine nasal spray (SPRAVATO®)** is approved by Health Canada for treatment-resistant depression and for depressive symptoms in adults with major depressive disorder and acute suicidal ideation or behaviour. Uses for other indications and all other intranasal formulations are considered off-label use.

Its authorization includes strict conditions related to patient selection, monitoring and administration in supervised clinical settings. Additionally, SPRAVATO® can only be prescribed by a physician who is enrolled in the JANSSEN JOURNEY™ Program. [Further information may be found here.](#)

## 2.0 Off-label uses

Off-label prescribing is allowed in Alberta but must be evidence-informed, clinically justified and clearly documented in the patient record. The prescriber is responsible for understanding the quality and limits of current evidence supporting off-label use and for communicating this to the patient. Off-label uses include all oral, sublingual, intranasal and parenteral formulations of ketamine.

### Off-label ketamine uses may include:

- Acute pain and chronic pain management
- Neuropathic pain
- Treatment-resistant depression (outside approved esketamine [SPRAVATO®] protocols)
- Other psychiatric conditions, including PTSD, anxiety disorders and psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy (see section 2.1)

### Off-label ketamine considerations:

- Prescribers are expected to refer to current evidence and guidelines to support their clinical decision-making.
- Prescribers must exercise caution where evidence is evolving, inconsistent or insufficient.
- Ketamine should not be presented to patients as a proven or definitive treatment if the supporting evidence is limited or uncertain.

## 2.1 Provision of psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy (PAPT) in Alberta as an off-label use

**Treatment of a psychiatric disorder becomes PAPT when the following three elements are present:**

1. The administration of one or more designated psychedelic drugs
  - Designated psychedelic drugs under the Mental Health Services Protection Regulation include:
    - Psilocybin
    - Psilocin
    - MDMA
    - LSD
    - Mescaline
    - DMT
    - 5-MeO-DMT
    - Ketamine
2. The provision of psychotherapy
3. The administration of one or more designated psychedelic drugs and the provision of psychotherapy are used for the purpose of treating a psychiatric disorder

**PAPT considerations:**

- The timing of all three elements listed above is not a relevant consideration (they could occur on the same or different days).
- There needs to be a link between the provision of the psychedelic drugs and psychotherapy by one or more providers.
  - This link is demonstrated by the intentional administration of one or more designated psychedelic drugs as a central aspect of the psychotherapy.
  - Without a link, the separate activities of use of a psychedelic drug and psychotherapy would not fall under the definition of psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy

## 3.0 Alberta's Legislative and Regulatory framework

Ketamine is regulated under the **Federal Controlled Drugs and Substances Act (CDSA)** and associated regulations. Prescribers must comply with all federal requirements related to controlled substances, including prescribing authority, storage, security, record-keeping and prevention of diversion.

### 3.1 Additional requirements under provincial legislation and professional regulation

**The use of ketamine, particularly when used for psychiatric indications or in a PAPT context, must comply with:**

- The [Health Professions Act \(HPA\)](#)
- CPSA [Standards of Practice](#) and [Advice to the Profession](#)
- [CPSA Bylaws, Prescribed Health Services \(Section 50, Schedule 1\)](#), identify PAPT as a service that may only be provided within a CPSA-accredited medical facility, including accreditation standards related to facilities providing treatment using ketamine. [Further information about facility accreditation may be found here.](#)
- CPSA Psychedelic-Assisted Psychotherapy (PAPT) Accreditation Standards and Non-Hospital Surgical Facilities: Off-label Use of Sedatives & Anesthetics Accreditation Standards
- The [Mental Health Services Protection Act](#)
- The [Mental Health Services Protection Regulation](#), as amended in October 2022, effective January 16, 2023
  - The amended *Mental Health Services Protection Regulation* establishes a formal oversight framework for psychedelic-assisted psychotherapy used to treat psychiatric disorders.

These requirements reflect Alberta’s recognition that PAPT is an emerging field with evolving evidence and heightened patient safety risks, requiring expert medical oversight and controlled clinical environments.

Prescribers remain individually accountable for ensuring that their use of ketamine complies with all applicable federal law, provincial legislation and CPSA standards, regardless of practice setting.

## 4.0 Prescribing authority and scope of practice

In Alberta, ketamine and its analogues are Type 1 TPP (Tracked Prescription Program) monitored medications. **Regulated members must be registered with TPP Alberta to prescribe ketamine**, its analogues and ketamine-containing products. [Further information about the TPP Alberta program may be found here.](#)

### 4.1 Treatment of psychiatric disorders using PAPT

Alberta legislation within the *Mental Health Services Protection Act* and *Mental Health Services Protection Regulation* (section 3.0 above) requires that:

- Only a psychiatrist, or a physician in consultation with a psychiatrist, may prescribe a psychedelic drug

- This restriction does not apply where ketamine is prescribed outside of PAPT

Alberta legislation within the *Mental Health Services Protection Act* and *Mental Health Services Protection Regulation* (section 3.0 above) requires that prescribers ensure all ketamine prescriptions include:

- Patient-specific identification
- Clear directions regarding the quantity that may be dispensed or sold at one time
- Required intervals between dispensations or sales
- The prescribed dosage
- Whether the drug is intended to be used in the context of PAPT

Prescribers must not exceed their competence or training and must be able to manage both the expected and adverse effects of ketamine, including psychiatric and cardiovascular complications.

## 4.2 Relevant CPSA Standards of Practice

- [Prescribing: Drugs Associated with Substance Use Disorder or Substance Related Harms](#)
- [Prescribing: Administration](#)
- [Patient Record Content](#)
- [Continuity of Care](#)
- [Restricted Activities](#)
- [Informed Consent](#)

## 5.0 Service and setting requirements

### 5.1 PAPT for psychiatric disorders

According to Alberta legislation within the *Mental Health Services Protection Act* and *Mental Health Services Protection Regulation* (section 3.0 above), when ketamine is provided as part of PAPT, the following Alberta requirements apply:

- The service provider must be licensed under the *Mental Health Services Protection Act*
- Administration must occur at a licensed facility, hospital, or accredited medical clinic, except for end-of-life care
- A psychiatrist must be appointed as medical director
- Self-administration is prohibited
- Direct dispensation or sale to patients is prohibited
- Patients must be monitored, treated and cared for by authorized personnel while in an altered state of consciousness

- Psychotherapy must be provided by professionals meeting prescribed qualification and regulatory CPSA requirements
- Psychotherapy must only be provided within CPSA-accredited medical facilities by a psychiatrist or a physician in consultation with a psychiatrist.  
[Further information about facility accreditation may be found here.](#)

These safeguards are intended to address the heightened vulnerability associated with altered states of consciousness and to reduce the risk of physical harm, psychological injury, abuse or suicide.

## 5.2 Ketamine outside of PAPT

According to Alberta legislation within the *Mental Health Services Protection Act* and *Mental Health Services Protection Regulation* (section 3.0 above), when ketamine is prescribed outside of PAPT:

- There are no additional prescribing limitations beyond standard controlled-substance requirements
- For oral, sublingual or intranasal formulations, there are no additional service setting restrictions
- For parenteral formulations:
  - Administration must occur in a medical facility or clinic, except for end-of-life care
  - Self-administration and direct dispensation are prohibited for these formulations
  - Monitoring and care requirements apply where the patient is in an altered state

Prescribers must ensure that the clinical model used is appropriate to the formulation, dose, and risk profile.

## 5.3 Relevant CPSA *Standards of Practice*

- [Responsibility for a Medical Practice](#)
- [Continuity of Care](#)
- [Restricted Activities](#)
- [Patient Record Content](#)
- [Informed Consent](#)
- [Referral Consultation](#)

## 6.0 Administrative, documentation and quality assurance requirements

### 6.1 PAPT administrative requirements

According to Alberta legislation within the *Mental Health Services Protection Act* and *Mental Health Services Protection Regulation* (section 3.0 above), licensed providers offering PAPT must:

- Hold a valid license under the *Mental Health Services Protection Act*
- Maintain written policies and procedures
- Ensure staff meet qualification and training requirements
- Maintain records related to service delivery, utilization and complaints
- Report critical incidents and respond appropriately
- Be accredited by CPSA in accordance with [CPSA Bylaws, Prescribed Health Services \(Section 50, Schedule 1\)](#) and [Psychedelic-Assisted Psychotherapy \(PAPT\) Accreditation Standards](#).
- For parental formulations of ketamine, the medical facility or clinic must be accredited under the CPSA Non-Hospital Surgical Facilities: Off-label Use of Sedatives & Anesthetics Accreditation Standards.

### 6.2 Ketamine documentation requirements

According to Alberta legislation within the *Mental Health Services Protection Act* and *Mental Health Services Protection Regulation* (section 3.0 above), all regulated member prescribers must maintain clear, complete and contemporaneous medical records that support the clinical rationale for ketamine use. Documentation must demonstrate:

- Evidence-informed decision-making
- Informed consent, including off-label use where applicable
- Ongoing assessment of benefits, risks and treatment goals
- Monitoring, adverse events and follow-up plans

### 6.3 Quality assurance requirements

According to Alberta legislation within the *Mental Health Services Protection Act* and *Mental Health Services Protection Regulation* (section 3.0 above), quality assurance processes should be in place to identify safety concerns, respond to adverse outcomes and discontinue treatment when risks outweigh benefits.

### 6.4 Relevant CPSA *Standards of Practice*

- [Patient Record Content](#)
- [Continuity of Care](#)
- [Informed Consent](#)
- [Referral Consultation](#)

## 7.0 Professional accountability

Professional accountability cannot be delegated. Physicians remain responsible for ensuring that ketamine use:

- Is clinically justified
- Is supported by evidence proportionate to the risks
- Meets all legislative, regulatory and professional obligations
- Always prioritizes patient safety

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### Resources

[Ketamine for Adults With Treatment-Resistant Depression or Posttraumatic Stress Disorder: A 2023 Update | Canadian Journal of Health Technologies](#)

[Efficacy and safety of ketamine maintenance therapy in treatment-resistant depression: A systematic review of treatment protocols and clinical outcomes | ScienceDirect](#)

[Ketamine and its Regulatory Implications: A Review | Journal of Medical Regulation](#)