



# Standard of Practice: Accepting New Patients (2017)

A **Standard of Practice** is the minimum standard of professional behavior and ethical conduct expected by the College on a specific issue.

## Accepting New Patients

### Preamble

Access to physician services is a concern for the public and the profession. When deciding whether to accept a new patient, physicians must ensure their decision is fair and non-discriminatory.

### Standard of Practice

In the selection of new patients, physicians must ensure that access to medical care for patients is fair and non-discriminatory.

### Discrimination

Physicians are bound by the *Human Rights Act* which prohibits discrimination regarding provision of, or access to, services or facilities.

The following grounds of discrimination are not acceptable reasons for denial of a patient into a medical practice: race, colour, nationality, ethnic origin, social origin, religious creed, religion, age, disability, disfigurement, sex, sexual orientation, gender identity, gender expression, marital status, family status, source of income and political opinion.

### Patient Selection Process

Physicians who are able to accept new patients into their practice should use a first-come, first-served approach. Decisions to accept or refuse new patients must be made in good faith.

A physician who restricts or selects patients for his or her practice for any reason must establish a selection process which is clearly articulated to the prospective patient. The selection criteria for accepting patients must be relevant to the physician's clinical competence and medical practice and to a patient's health care needs.

Decisions not to accept an individual as a patient should be conveyed respectfully and honestly.

### **Medical Questionnaires**

The College cautions against requiring or asking prospective patients to fill out medical questionnaires until they have been accepted as patients as this practice may be viewed as discriminatory.

## Acknowledgements

College of Physicians and Surgeons of Alberta (2016).  
College of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia (2015).  
College of Physicians and Surgeons of Manitoba (2016).  
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College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario (2014).  
McCurry, T.M. Jr. & Kasdan, M.L. (2006). Patient selection. *Clinics in Occupational and Environmental Medicine*, 5(2), 217-223.

## Document History

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