



Standard of Practice: Advertising (2021)

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

Advertising

Preamble

Advertising and public communications reflect the notice and/or exchange of information that is communicated orally, in print, or through any electronic means to members of the public. Advertisements must be limited to factual and truthful information that assists a patient in making an informed decision.

Definitions

“Advertisement” means any communication made orally, in print, or through any electronic means by/on behalf of a physician, to any person, which includes the general public, to promote the physicians’ facility, clinic, group, corporation, or other practice or business entity with which the physician is associated or of any services/products provided therein.

Standard of Practice

An advertisement ***should not***:

- be misleading or deceptive;
- compare or condemn, either directly or indirectly, another physician’s services, facility, clinic, group, fees, competency, or expertise;
- assert that the physician can offer more effective services than those available elsewhere;
- create unrealistic or unjustified expectations about the results that the physician can achieve;

- offer prizes, gifts, discounts, or other benefits for medical services; or
- be offensive or incompatible with the best interests of the public or tend to harm the reputation of the medical profession.

An advertisement ***should***:

- be factual, truthful, and verifiable;
- provide the public with relevant information which would enable patients to make informed choices;
- accurately reflect the suitable knowledge, skills, and judgement a physician needs to practise in the advertised areas; and
- be respectful of the privacy and confidentiality of all patients.

Advertising Credentials and Practice Interests

Advertisements should only contain credentials which have been verified by the College.

The College recognizes that physicians often develop skills and expertise as subsets of the practice area recognized on their licences. Practice interests may only be included in advertising if the interest is within the context of the physician's experience and expertise and is supported by regular continuing medical education. Physicians must clearly indicate this expertise as a "practice interest" or "special interest" and avoid language which could be interpreted to mean that the physician had received credentials recognized by the College in this area.

Before and After Photos/Videos

Physicians can use before and after images for the purpose of providing accurate and educational information. Physicians must only use before and after images in circumstances where the physician has first obtained the written consent of the patient. Images used must be of actual patients and portray outcomes that can reasonably and typically be expected. Images cannot be manipulated to misrepresent the results of the medical service.

Acknowledgements

CPSBC (2020) Advertising and Communication with the Public (Practice Standard)

CPSO (2020) Advertising (Policy)

CPSNS (2018) Professional Standards Regarding Advertising and Public Communication by Physicians.

CPSA (2018) Advertising (Advise to the Profession), (2015) Advertising (Standard of Practice).

Document History

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