



COLLEGE & ASSOCIATION OF
Acupuncturists
OF ALBERTA

April 10, 2020

CAAA Guidelines Regarding Tele-health

Dear Members:

Since the public health emergency state was announced, the CAAA office has received phone calls and emails, inquiring about Guidelines regarding tele-health in relation to the announcement of the Chief Medical Officer of Health (CMOH) new Order (CMOH Order 07-2020), Prohibitions on Non-Essential Health Services.

Council responded swiftly. A special meeting was called on March 28, 2020. After careful deliberation, the CAAA Council approved Guidelines regarding Prohibitions on Non-Essential Services (<http://acupuncturealberta.ca/wp-content/uploads/2020/04/CAAA-GUIDELINE-APR-2-2020.pdf>) and has now approved the following Guidelines regarding tele-health. Acupuncturists must comply with both Guidelines.

1. Tele-health (aka “telemedicine”)

Tele-health (aka “telemedicine”) is a method of delivery for health services by means of telecommunications and information technology where the patient and the practitioner are separated by distance.

Where appropriate, Acupuncturists may provide non-essential health services by means of tele-health to provide continued care to patients.

In provision of tele-health services, Acupuncturists are obligated to abide by and uphold the requirements in relevant regulations, standards of practice, and code of ethics. Acupuncturists can only treat patients within the jurisdiction of Alberta.

Acupuncture Regulation

http://www.qp.alberta.ca/1266.cfm?page=1988_042.cfm&leg_type=Regs&isbncln=0779751051

Standards of Competency and Practice

<http://acupuncturealberta.ca/pdfs/regulations/standard-competency-practice.pdf>

Code of Professional Conduct

<http://acupuncturealberta.ca/pdfs/regulations/code-of-professional-conduct.pdf>

Provision of tele-health services, where necessary and appropriate, is intended to provide continued care to existing patients who have all had a thorough intake/assessment. Patients must be advised, in advance of a tele-health session, the appropriateness, limitations and privacy issues associated with this method of delivery. Informed consent must still be obtained by the Acupuncturist from the patient and the Acupuncturist must record the consent and how it was obtained (i.e., verbally, via email, etc.) in the patient record.

2. Services that may be provided via tele-health

The CAAA Council authorizes Acupuncturists to provide, via telehealth, the following services in accordance with the *Acupuncture Regulation*, section 7, permitted modes of practice, and the *Standards of Competency and Practice* provided that Acupuncturists have completed respective education and clinical practice which are verifiable:

- *Tui na massage (including tapping)*
- *Gua sha*
- *Qigong exercises*
- *Acupressure*
- *Self-cupping with silicone cups*
- Dietary and lifestyle advice such as nutrition (recommended foods and foods to avoid)
- Assessment for referral to primary health care as needed

Acupuncturists are NOT authorized to provide the following services via telehealth:

- Prescribing herbs is not authorized via telehealth or any other form of delivery (including in the context of urgent and emergent care in posted **Guidelines Regarding Prohibitions on Non-Essential Services**).
- Guidance in moxibustion and self-moxibustion is not authorized via telehealth due to potential safety concerns in the patient working with fire.

Patients must be provided with clear direction on how to self-administer the authorized services and patients must be cautioned that they are only to self-administer these services while under the observation and guidance of the Acupuncturist.

NOTE: BY AUTHORIZING ACUPUNCTURISTS TO PROVIDE TELE-HEALTH, THE CAAA DOES NOT AUTHORIZE ACUPUNCTURISTS TO MAKE ANY CLAIMS ABOUT PREVENTION OR TREATMENT OF COVID-19.

3. Insurance coverage

The insurer ENCON has approved coverage of tele-health delivery on the basis of CAAA approval of the practice. Acupuncturists who have used different insurance companies shall ensure coverage of tele-health prior to provision of tele-health.

Patients must be informed that their health benefit policy may or may not cover the tele-health services. Fees for tele-health services must be discussed and agreed to prior to delivery of the service.

Invoices/receipts must indicate that services were provided via tele-health as assessment and consultation fee.

4. Privacy & Tele-health platforms

Members must be reminded that they are fully responsible to ensure compliance with all pertinent privacy legislation and health record keeping requirements. Listed below are some of the relevant links:

- Alberta Electronic Health Record Regulation
http://www.qp.alberta.ca/documents/Regs/2010_118.pdf
- Personal Information Protection Act
<https://www.alberta.ca/personal-information-protection...>

To ensure confidentiality and security of patient information, the following platforms are listed for Acupuncturists' consideration. The CAAA has not endorsed those platforms and does not take any liabilities from using them by Acupuncturists.

- www.vsee.com
- www.doxy.me
- www.zoom.us (paid version)
- www.janeapp.com
- www.physitrack.com

Many platforms are not compliant with applicable privacy legislations and as such must not be used, which include:

- FaceTime
- Skype
- Zoom (free version)
- WeChat
- What's App

Further members must take all necessary steps to ensure full privacy and confidentiality of any Tele-health sessions.

5. Safety considerations

A safety protocol must be in place to manage any unforeseen, emergency or adverse event, such as fall, fainting, heart attack, etc.

The safety protocol should:

- ensure a secure connection and privacy for the duration of the session;
- have an emergency contact number;
- ensure adequate space for what is planned in the session; and

- ensure all required materials and resources are easily accessible

Alternate means of contact must be agreed to at the outset in the event the Tele-health link is lost.