

# Registrar's message: facing new and emerging challenges during the ongoing pandemic



Further to the message shared last week by the College Board, I too would like to acknowledge the strain placed on frontline health-care workers, exacerbated more recently by challenging patient encounters, and extend my gratitude to all registrants for their resilience as the pandemic continues in this fourth wave.

Recently the [Canadian Medical Forum](#), which brings together leaders of Canada's major national medical and health organizations to address health system issues, released a [joint statement](#) condemning the bullying, attacks and violence against health workers across the country, including the rallies and protests being held by anti-vaccine groups outside of hospitals and other health-care settings.

We are also hearing about patients who are refusing to wear masks in accordance with current mandates, refusing to disclose their vaccine status, refusing to get a COVID-19 test when indicated, or demanding inappropriate medical exemptions to the vaccine. This behaviour is unacceptable.

As communicated recently, the provincial health officer (PHO) has released clear guidance outlining [valid contraindications and deferrals to COVID-19 vaccination](#). The reasons for individuals to be medically exempt from receiving the vaccine are clear and there are very few exceptions. We hope this guidance is useful to registrants in their interactions with patients.

In response to concerns raised by registrants who have patients seeking to obtain prescriptions for ivermectin to treat COVID-19 symptoms, the College issued a [joint statement](#) with the colleges of nurses and midwives, and pharmacists last week. In short, the colleges and the PHO do not approve of the use of ivermectin for either treatment or prophylaxis for COVID-19 and registrants must not prescribe it for this purpose.

We know that these difficult patient interactions are distressing and that they are causing great strain on individuals and the entire health-care system, which is already burdened by staffing shortages, restricted resources, cancelled surgeries, and limited capacity for a growing number of acutely sick patients.

We urge you to prioritize your own well-being as you confront these challenges and remind you that the Doctors of BC's [Physician Health Program](#) is there to support and assist you in dealing with life events and daily situations that can impact your mental and physical health. Please remember that you are not alone.

Thank you for promoting science-based treatments, for getting vaccinated, and for shouldering this burden as you continue to care for BC patients.

With great respect for all that you continue to do,

Heidi M. Oetter, MD  
Registrar and CEO

## **References and resources**

- [Canadian Medical Forum – joint statement on bullying](#)
- [CMPA – Challenging patient encounters: how to safely manage and de-escalate](#)
- [CMPA – Vaccination](#)
- [Physician Health Program](#)

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