



September 15, 2021

## Guidance re: valid contraindications and deferrals to COVID-19 vaccination

Dear registrant,

With the BC Vaccine Card becoming operational and the recently announced mandate that all people who work in health authority facilities will have to be fully vaccinated with a COVID-19 vaccine, you may be getting requests from patients for medical notes to be exempted from receiving a vaccine. The following is guidance on how to determine the validity of such requests.

The College's [Medical Certificates and Other Third-party Reports](#) practice standard contains principles, such as the examples below, on providing medical certificates to patients.

- Statements made must be truthful and based on objective clinical information about the patient and not simply a repetition of the patient's self-diagnosis.
- Medical information must be presented in a clear and factual manner, with opinions that are supported by objective medical evidence.
- Conjecture, speculation and inappropriate advocacy in medical certificates or reports must be avoided.

The College acknowledges that requests from patients for certificates without bone fide medical conditions can lead to challenging clinical encounters. To assist you with these situations, the Provincial Health Officer has recently published [guidance on valid deferrals to vaccination](#). There are very few acceptable medical contraindications to the COVID-19 vaccination. It may be helpful to share this guidance with your patients so that they understand what constitutes a legitimate medical condition that warrants a medical certificate.

Registrants are reminded that vaccination is the most effective measure to reduce the risk of COVID-19 in individuals and in our community. You as a trusted practitioner may be able to help patients overcome vaccine hesitancy. Myths continue to go unchallenged, such as immunocompromised patients, patients with autoimmune disease or pregnant patients should not be vaccinated. All three conditions put people at higher risk for severe illness with COVID-19, and in these cases, vaccines are not only recommended but prioritized.

It is important to have conversations with eligible patients to educate and encourage them to get fully vaccinated as soon as possible. More information on COVID-19 vaccine can be found on the [BCCDC website](#).

It is a particularly challenging time with civil protests targeting health-care workers who have worked tirelessly for the last 18 months. These protests underscore the important role you have in addressing and correcting the misinformation circulating about COVID-19. Your continued dedication to keeping patients

healthy and safe is to be commended. I want to thank you for your professionalism, dedication and public service during the ongoing pandemic.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'H. Oetter', with a stylized flourish at the end.

Heidi M. Oetter, MD  
Registrar and CEO  
College of Physicians and  
Surgeons of British Columbia