



College of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia

# Professional Standards and Guidelines

## Emailing Patient Information

### Preamble

This document is a guideline of the Board of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia.

### College's Position

When transmitting patient information electronically, security and patient confidentiality must be maintained and guarded in the same way as traditional paper medical records are protected.

Physicians are encouraged to adhere to the following guidelines when using email to transmit patient information:

- Obtain the express and informed consent of the patient or representative before transmitting patient information electronically.
- Confidential and sensitive patient information sent by email should be encrypted or, at a minimum, password protected with access provided only to designated individuals. The password or cryptographic key must be sent separately to the intended recipient, preferably by phone or other non-electronic communication.
- Email addresses should be double checked before sending patient information.
- Email may not be the appropriate mode of communication in all instances and should not be considered a substitute for effective personal communication. For example, email should not be used to inform a patient about a diagnosis or discuss sensitive information.
- Develop clear, written policies around the use of email in your practice to communicate patient information and ensure they are followed consistently.

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