



College of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia

# Professional Standards and Guidelines

## Fax Transmission of Prescriptions

### Preamble

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

The transmission of a signed prescription via facsimile is an accepted authorization for a pharmacist to dispense a medication. A faxed signed prescription is equivalent to a written prescription. As for all prescriptions, the pharmacist must ensure the authenticity of the prescription and that the physician is, indeed, the prescriber.

In addition to the normal legal requirements of a prescription, the following requirements must be met:

- The prescription must only be sent to the pharmacy of the patient's choice
- The prescription must be sent directly from the physician's office or the health care institution
- The prescription must include the prescriber's telephone number, facsimile number, the time and date of transmission, and the name and fax number of the pharmacy intended to receive the transmission
- A clear record of the prescribing is to be maintained in the medical record of the patient

### NOTE

Duplicate prescriptions for controlled drugs may not be transmitted by facsimile except in exceptional circumstances where the faxed prescription must be followed up with the hard copy of the original prescription from the duplicate prescription pad. This includes Methadone, whether prescribed in the management of addiction or for pain. Under federal legislation, it is currently illegal to transmit a prescription electronically in any way other than by facsimile or by telephone. There are ongoing discussions involving Health Canada and Canada Health Infoway to address this issue. The challenges to enable full electronic prescribing include the requisite changes to the legislation as well as the methodology to certify or verify that the electronically transmitted prescription was truly sent by the physician.

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