

# CODE OF ETHICS



## Nova Scotia College of Pharmacists

The Code of Ethics of the Nova Scotia College of Pharmacists (NSCP) fosters professional behaviour and conveys to the community the values and ideals to which the profession aspires by reason of trust and commitment. It provides guidance to registrants, including pharmacists, pharmacy technicians, pharmacy students and interns in making ethical decisions and assists them in their relationships with patients, colleagues and society. The Code is an essential document not only for registrants, but also for all stakeholders of the profession of pharmacy.

For those within the profession, the Code identifies the ethical expectations and obligations of registrants and serves as a tool for ongoing self-evaluation and peer review. For other health care professionals and the public, the Code identifies the values and moral commitments of registrants in return for the trust given to them by society.

As the profession of pharmacy evolves, increasing pressures may present challenges to registrants in their practice. This Code provides registrants with support in making ethical decisions. The issues involved in registrants' decision making have both legal and ethical dimensions. Laws and ethics of pharmacy practice overlap and, in ideal situations, are compatible. Both are concerned with the conduct of registrants and with the well-being of the public. Although the Code of Ethics forms part of the law that governs pharmacy practice, the domains of pharmacy law and ethics are distinct and, while prepared with awareness of the law, this Code addresses ethical obligations.

## THE PATIENT

### Value I – Best Interest

**Registrants hold the health and safety of each patient to be of primary importance.**

- Registrants place the health and wellbeing of their patients at the center of their professional practice.
- Registrants provide optimal treatment and care.
- Registrants use their specialized knowledge to make informed and scientifically sound decisions in the best interest of their patients and the public.
- Registrants provide prescription and non-prescription medicines, services and health related products that are safe, effective and of good quality.

### Value II – Professional Relationship with the Patient

**Registrants cultivate a professional relationship with each patient.**

- Registrants will not discriminate inappropriately against any person in providing pharmacy services.
- Registrants maintain appropriate professional boundaries and ensure their relationships are only for the benefit of those they serve. They do not enter into personal relationships, romantic or sexual, with persons in their care.

- Registrants respect the professional relationship with the patient and act with honesty, integrity and compassion in such a way as to build the patient's trust and confidence in the registrant.
- Registrants understand that the nature of their relationship places them in a position of power and that this power must be carefully exercised in the patient's best interests.
- Registrants treat all those they serve with courtesy and respect.
- Registrants engage in patient centered care and encourage patients to participate in decisions regarding their health.
- Registrants listen to the patient and the patient's caregiver to seek to understand their health goals and to meet their unique communication needs.
- Registrants advocate for and protect the well-being of each patient, especially those who are vulnerable or disenfranchised.
- Registrants take all reasonable steps to prevent harm to patients.
- Registrants act with honesty and transparency in the event of an error or adverse event.
- Registrants limit treatment of themselves or immediate family members only to minor conditions, emergency circumstances or when another appropriate health professional is not readily available.

### **Value III – Respect for Autonomy**

#### **Registrants honour the autonomy, values and dignity of each patient.**

- Registrants recognise and respect the patient's needs, beliefs, values, experiences and preferences, particularly as they apply to their attitudes to suggested treatments.
- Registrants promote the right to self-determination and provide, objectively, information that is truthful, accurate, objective and understandable so that patients are able to make informed choices in giving consent for their health care.
- Registrants only enter into or engage in any arrangements, agreements or businesses that protect a patient's right to safe, accessible and professional health care services.
- Registrants inform patients when personal values may influence their provision of care and do so in a manner that respects the patient's right to choose.
- Registrants respect the informed decisions of a competent patient to choose what is right for him or herself, including the choice to refuse treatment or services and to live at risk.
- Registrants respect the dignity of patients with diminished competence and seek to involve them to an appropriate extent, along with their substitute decision maker, in issues regarding their health.

### **Value IV – Privacy and Confidentiality**

#### **Registrants respect and protect the patient's right of confidentiality.**

- Registrants understand, respect and comply with all relevant legislation pertaining to privacy and personal health information.
- Registrants protect and keep confidential all information acquired and opinions formed about patients in the course of professional practice.
- Registrants respect the patient's ownership of their health information.
- Registrants avoid public discussion or comments about patients that could reasonably be seen as revealing confidential or identifying information.
- Registrants only collect and access personal information for the purpose of providing care to the patient.

### **Value V – Responsibility to the Patient**

#### **Registrants respect the patient's right to receive care.**

- Registrants take all reasonable steps to provide appropriate medications and services to their patients. Registrants who are unable to provide prescribed medicines or services to their patients take reasonable steps to ensure patient care is not jeopardized.

- Registrants, who do not provide medicines or services to patients because of a conscientious objection including personal, moral or religious reasons, inform pharmacy management of their objections at the earliest opportunity. Pharmacy management provides reasonable accommodation of the registrant's right of conscience and develops an appropriate means to ensure the medicines or services are provided in as timely and convenient a manner as possible.
- Registrants play a role in assisting patients to navigate the healthcare system, including referring them to other appropriate healthcare providers, services and community resources.
- Registrants continue to provide services to their patient until the services are no longer required or wanted; until another provider has assumed responsibility for the patient; or until the registrant has provided reasonable notice of termination of the relationship.
- Although not expected to provide drugs or services for free, registrants will not abandon the professional relationship with the patient simply because the patient is unable to pay.
- Registrants plan for continuity of care to their patients in the event of conscientious objection, contract disputes, labour action, pharmacy relocation or closure, natural disasters or other situations where continuity of care may be interrupted.

## **SOCIETY**

### **Value VI – Observation of the Law and Preservation of Professional Standards**

**Registrants observe the law, preserve high professional standards and uphold the dignity and honour of the profession.**

- Registrants obey the laws, regulations, standards and policies of the profession, both in letter and in spirit.
- Registrants embrace the ethical principles of the profession and do not engage in activity that will undermine public trust in or bring discredit to the profession.
- Registrants raise concern if policies, systems, working conditions or the actions, professional performance or health of others may compromise patient care or public safety or are in breach of the law, regulations, standards or policies.
- Registrants do not practice under conditions which compromise their freedom to exercise professional judgment or which cause a deterioration of the quality of their professional service or care.
- Registrants do not jeopardize others' ability to provide optimal patient care or comply with legal and professional obligations.
- Registrants recognize and disclose conflicts of interests that arise in the course of their work and address them as soon as possible in the best interest of the patient and public safety.
- Registrants do not enter into arrangements that undermine, or could reasonably be perceived to undermine, their own or another healthcare professional's judgement or that are otherwise inappropriate.
- Registrants understand the boundaries of their roles in providing care to the patient and act in accordance with those boundaries.
- Registrants do not seek more than fair and reasonable remuneration for their professional services.
- Registrants advertise and promote their services only through methods that uphold the dignity and honour of the profession and which are within the boundaries of the law.
- Registrants do not abuse drugs or alcohol.
- Registrants do not condone the abuse of drugs or alcohol by colleagues or co-workers and report the abuse to the appropriate authority to be addressed.

### **Value VII – Continued Competence**

**Registrants continuously improve their levels of professional knowledge and skills.**

- Registrants assume the responsibility of continually evaluating and improving their professional competence and performance.
- Registrants are aware of the limitations of their knowledge and skills and practice within the boundaries of their professional competence.

- Registrants engage in lifelong learning to maintain and improve professional knowledge, skills and attitudes.
- Registrants respond constructively to the outcomes of quality assessments and inspections as well as other evaluations and reviews of their professional performance and undertake further education and training when necessary.

### **Value VIII – Collaboration**

**Registrants cooperate with colleagues and other health care professionals so that maximum benefits to patients and the public can be realized.**

- Registrants respect the values and abilities of colleagues and other health care professionals.
- Registrants consult with colleagues or other health care professionals when appropriate to benefit the patient.
- Registrants refer their patients to other health care professionals or agencies when appropriate.
- Registrants work collaboratively with colleagues to ensure patients' needs are met including, but not limited to, transferring copies of prescriptions or inventory.
- Registrants seek opportunities to work with others to foster a collaborative approach to healthcare and continuing education.

### **Value IX – Societal Health**

**Registrants contribute to the health care system and to societal health needs.**

- Registrants promote health, wellness and disease prevention.
- Registrants promote positive changes in the health care system by actively participating in health policy development, review and revision.
- Registrants support cost-effective therapies, the rational use of medicines and services and the prudent use of health care resources.
- Registrants promote fair and equitable access to health care resources and services.
- Registrants support the appropriate use, and the reduction of the abuse or misuse of drugs.
- Registrants serve as a health resource and participate in programs to educate the public about health.
- Registrants take appropriate measures to mitigate potential public risks that may arise from their practice decisions.
- Registrants are responsible to the community and society as a whole in times of public emergencies.
- Registrants foster the advancement of knowledge by supporting appropriate research whenever possible.
- Registrants support environmental stewardship by promoting the safe disposal of drugs and related products.

## **THE PROFESSION**

### **Value X – Integrity of the Profession**

**Registrants act in a manner that enhances the profession of pharmacy and promotes public trust and confidence.**

- Registrants recognize that self-regulation of the profession is a privilege and that each registrant has an ongoing responsibility to support the public interest mandate of the Nova Scotia College of Pharmacists.
- Registrants associate with organizations that strive to improve the profession of pharmacy to ensure the public is well served.
- Registrants contribute to the ongoing development of the profession by participating in the education and training of students, interns and other health care providers.
- Registrants exemplify leadership qualities, exhibiting a commitment to excellence and integrity in all undertakings.