

Updated Guidance from Medical Colleges on Treatment of Essential Workers

Background:

The Ontario Trucking Association (OTA) has received numerous reports that various health related professionals were declining appointments for essential workers who crossed the Canada-US border for work related purposes. OTA contacted the Ministry of Health (MOH) and the various oversight organizations of these health-related sectors to request a review and further clarification of these guidelines.

Over the past few months, the OTA has worked with the various regulatory bodies and the MOH to obtain further clarification and changes to guidelines to better accommodate cross-border truck drivers during the pandemic, so that cross-border truck drivers who have not tested positive for COVID-19 and who are not experiencing any of the COVID-19 symptoms can receive the same medical service all Ontarians could expect.

College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario:

After bringing to light the issue of truck drivers being refused visitation by some medical practitioners and physicians due to COVID-19 concerns, the OTA has received a letter from the College of Physicians of Ontario (CPSO) stating the College has reviewed its policy on servicing truck driver patients who are essential workers and cross the border. The new guidance to give practitioners the ability to practice greater clinical judgement in scenarios where essential workers may screen positive.

The following is the new policy issued by CPSO to their members:

"You may have some patients who are essential workers that are required to regularly travel across the US-Canada border as a part of their job...Recognizing that these individuals have been deemed essential workers and exempted from the quarantine and isolation rules set out by the federal government, the College is supportive of physicians exercising their clinical judgment regarding how to best care for these patients when they screen positive solely because of work related travel. An immediate deferral of in-person care or redirection to another facility is not necessary in these instances provided appropriate safety precautions can be met. If there is no opportunity to see a patient following a 14-day window without travel across the border or a negative COVID-19 test, physicians can arrange to see the patient for any in-person care if they can satisfy the recommended precautions to do so safely (i.e., immediately isolating the individual upon arrival, use of appropriate PPE)."

A copy of CPSO's letter with this clarification can be found [here](#).

Royal College of Dental Surgeons:

The Royal College of Dental Surgeons (RCDSO) has continued to seek clarification of the quarantine requirement for cross-border truck drivers. During recent discussions with OTA, the RCDSO advised they are working closely with their College counterparts and the MOH to address this ongoing concern. They also advise that their guidance permits dentists and dental surgeons to exercise clinical judgment

when treating essential workers. The applicable guidance issued to dentists can be found in RCDSO's [COVID-19 FAQ](#) page and [COVID-19 Guidance Document](#).

College of Chiropractors of Ontario:

The College of Chiropractors of Ontario (CCO) continues to have dialogue with the MOH on practices and procedures relating to COVID-19, and although CCO reiterates that there is not a specific exemption for certain types of essential workers, updated [CCO guidance documents](#) also provide protocols for their members to use their clinical judgment to assess the risk associated with patients who may have screened positive. The CCO is also encouraging their members to take enhanced safety protocols to provide care to such patients.

College of Optometrists of Ontario:

The College of Optometrists of Ontario (COO) indicated travel outside of Canada remains a positive screening result for COVID-19, and if additional options outlined in their [FAQ document](#), including an appointment deferral, using telehealth, or a negative screening result within 14 days cannot be satisfied, scheduling an appointment with an optometrist, or referral to an ophthalmologist, with additional PPE, is possible. The COO has also reported considerably lower enquiries on this topic from truck drivers over the last few months.

The College of Massage Therapists of Ontario:

The College of Massage Therapists of Ontario (CMTO) for additional updates. The CMTO states that "because of the nature of massage therapy treatment, which requires the client and massage therapist to be in close proximity for an extended amount of time, they have advised massage therapists not to treat clients who screen as COVID positive. CMTO is committed to continue working with MOH and other stakeholders to ensure access to care and safety for Ontarians moving forward."

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