



College of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia

# Professional Guideline

## Emailing Patient Information

<b>Effective:</b>	February 2013
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<b>Related topic(s):</b>	<a href="#">Data Stewardship Framework</a> , <a href="#">Telemedicine</a> , <a href="#">Photographic, Video or Audio Recording of Patients</a>

A **professional guideline** reflects a recommended course of action established based on the values, principles and duties of the medical profession. Physicians may exercise reasonable discretion in their decision-making based on the guidance provided.

**Registrants may seek advice on these issues by contacting the College and asking to speak with a member of the registrar staff, or by seeking medical legal advice from the CMPA.**

## PREAMBLE

This document is a professional 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.