



CDA POSITION STATEMENT ON THE PROVISION OF DERMATOLOGIC CARE IN CANADA

It is the position of the Canadian Dermatology Association (CDA) that all Canadians are entitled to the best possible dermatologic care. Ideally, this means care from a dermatologist certified by the Royal College of Physicians & Surgeons of Canada or a provider holding dermatologic certification from another jurisdiction that is recognized by the Canadian provincial medical colleges and who completes the licensing criteria specified by the provincial college.

Certified dermatologists are experts in medical, surgical and aesthetic skin care.

After completing medical school training, physicians in Canada are required to complete five years of residency training and successfully pass a rigorous specialist board examination to become dermatologists. Dermatology residency training focuses on diagnosis of skin disease, efficient use of appropriate diagnostic testing and training in the collection and interpretation of skin biopsy specimens. Further, dermatologists are extensively trained in the pharmacologic, surgical and psychosocial management of skin disease.

Many dermatologists complete additional training in the surgical management of skin diseases such as skin cancers, the use of energy-based devices such as lasers, aesthetic procedures, pediatric skin disease and other dermatologic subspecialties. All dermatologists are required to participate in, document and report continuing professional development activities to expand their knowledge and skills throughout their careers.

Unfortunately, timely access to a certified dermatologist for primary or secondary care may not always be possible due to many workforce and population factors. The CDA recognizes that, given all of these factors, access to a certified dermatologist may not be practically possible for Canadians with skin disease in all cases.

As such, the provision of dermatologic care may at times be provided by physicians who do not have specialty training in dermatology or by allied healthcare providers such as nurse practitioners or physician assistants.

When dermatologic care is to be provided by a non-dermatologist, it is the position of the CDA that:

Non-dermatologist providers must clearly disclose to patients that they are not specialty trained certified dermatologists. The use of the terms "dermatology", "dermatologist", "specialist", "skin specialist" or "GP dermatologist" must be avoided. Any other designation that might reasonably denote specialist training in dermatology to patients must also be avoided.

In the case of nurse practitioners or physician assistants, patients must be made aware that care is not being provided by a physician. All dermatology care provided by allied health professionals should be conducted under the supervision of a dermatologist as part of a health-care team.

Non-dermatologist providers who provide skin care services to Canadians must acquire and maintain an adequate body of knowledge and understanding of the diagnosis and management of skin disease.

Provincial, territorial and other regulatory authorities must hold these providers to the same high standards as certified dermatologists in the areas of dermatologic care that they provide.

The CDA recognizes the myriad challenges that may complicate the delivery of dermatologic care to all Canadians. We continue to assess how resources can best be allocated to optimize our ability to provide that care.

Approved by the CDA Board of Directors
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