

Practice Directive

Advertising

College of Registered Nurses of
Prince Edward Island

June 2024



Introduction

Registered Nurses (RNs) and Nurse Practitioners (NPs) who are self-employed may advertise services to promote their business and to inform the public about available options. An advertisement is any message controlled directly or indirectly by the nurse that is communicated in any medium (Advertising Standards Canada, 2019). This includes, but is not limited to, advertisements in print, online, media, or social media.

Prince Edward Island's Regulated Health Professions Act (2023) states "No member or health profession corporation shall engage in advertising that is untruthful, inaccurate or otherwise capable of misleading or misinforming the public". The Code of Ethics for Registered Nurses states "Nurses are honest and practice with integrity in all of their professional interactions. Nurses represent themselves clearly with respect to name, title, and role" (Canadian Nurses Association, 2017).

The College of Registered Nurses and Midwives of Prince Edward Island (CRNMPEI) maintains the public's trust in the nursing profession by setting the expectations for advertising nursing services to ensure the public is given accurate, factual, and verifiable information. CRNMPEI does not approve advertisements. Nursing services must be advertised in a manner that does not distract from the integrity and dignity of the nursing profession (College of Registered Nurses of Newfoundland and Labrador, 2019).

Guidelines

Registrants of CRNMPEI must:

- Confirm that their practice meets the definition of nursing found in the Registered Nurse regulations before advertising their professional services
- Only engage in advertising that is truthful, accurate, verifiable, and in the public's best interest
- Include a description of the services they provide, including the fees, to allow for the client to make an informed decision
- Include their name, professional designation and practice location in any advertising
- Include disclaimers, such as "Individual results may vary" or "results are not guaranteed", in the advertisement. The disclaimers should be as prominent as other aspects of the message in their advertisements
- Address any perceived or actual conflicts of interest
- Protect the privacy and confidentiality of all client health information when advertising health services. Ensure informed consent is obtained if a client consents to being used in an advertisement.
- Ensure an advertisement is consistent with federal, provincial and municipal laws
- Uphold the reputation of the profession

Registrants of CRNMPEI must not:

- Engage in advertising that is misleading, sensationalized, exaggerated or that misinforms the public
- Make unsubstantiated claims or reference to guarantees of the drug, health product, health services, or results
- Compare services, prices, or ability with any other health care provider, clinic, or group
- Offer any incentives for the public to seek their services
- Include CRNMPEI's logo or any statement that refers or implies CRNMPEI approval or support for the health service
- Create an unjustified or unreasonable expectation about the results they can achieve
- Use their professional designation to lead the public to believe that one product is better than the rest

Before and After Photos or Videos

A before and after photo/video is an image or a video of a client taken before, during and/or after a service and is used to document the process or demonstrate a result. They should only be used in advertising where the photos or videos:

- Provide accurate and educational information
- Portray an outcome that can be reasonably and typically expected
- Depict an actual client who received the advertised service from the nurse associated with the advertisement
- Are not manipulated to misrepresent the results of the service
- Includes a statement that says the outcome or results depicted are not guaranteed and may vary between clients

(College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario, 2020)

The nurse must obtain informed consent prior to using a client in a before and after photo or video. Informed consent should not be discussed and obtained until after the client has received the service. The client should not be offered any incentive to be involved and are able to withdraw consent at any point. However, the client should understand that if the before and after photo or video is used online or on social media it may be impossible to withdraw their consent completely.

Conclusion

Advertising that contains false and/or misleading content can compromise trust and harm the integrity of the profession. A nurse advertising misleading or sensationalized content may become the subject of a complaint and disciplinary proceedings (College of Registered Nurses of Alberta, 2022). Nurses may recommend products within the context of providing care or service to the client. Be mindful of not endorsing products or services that are not related to the care or services provided as a conflict of interest may exist if endorsing a product results in personal gains or

benefits. RNs and NPs are responsible and accountable to monitor all advertisements to ensure they meet and continue to meet these expectations.

References

College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario. (2020). *Advertising*. Accessed on June 4, 2024 from <https://www.cpso.on.ca/Physicians/Policies-Guidance/Policies/Advertising>

College of Registered Nurses of Alberta. (2022). *Advertising standards*. Accessed on June 4, 2024 from <https://nurses.ab.ca/media/wmaj1jgm/advertising-standards-2022.pdf>

College of Registered Nurses of Manitoba. (2020). *Guidelines for advertising*. Accessed on June 4, 2024 from <https://www.crnmb.ca/wp-content/uploads/2022/01/Guidelines-for-Advertising.pdf>

College of Registered Nurses of Newfoundland and Labrador. (2019). *Advertising nursing services*. Accessed on June 4, 2024 from <https://crnml.ca/site/uploads/2021/09/advertising-nursing-services.pdf>