

## DIVISION UPDATE

June 10, 2019

### Referrals to Specialists- Interpreting the College Guidelines

Communication within the healthcare system is a critical component of patient experience, safety and positive health outcomes. The College of Physicians and Surgeons revised the Referral-Consultation Process Guideline in 2018 and has subsequently provided several follow-up communications to better inform guideline implementation.

Specifically, the College advises that in all but exceptional circumstances, specialists are responsible for notifying patients about appointment details. (“In most situations, the consulting physician is best suited to communicate the appointment date and time to both the referring physician and the patient.”) Read the full guideline [here](#).

Given the impact of this guideline on family physicians and our specialist colleagues, as well as the feedback we received from a number of members, the Vancouver Division’s Continuity of Care Committee met with the College to discuss interpretation, enforcement and communication of the guidelines so as to ensure all physicians are aware of the changes.

The Continuity of Care Committee is also exploring how to work directly with members and specialists to ensure the College direction is understood and the guideline is followed.

Many specialists in the city have changed their processes to align with the guideline. Should you encounter instances of non-adherence to the guideline, the Vancouver Division recommends you remind specialists of the College position regarding best practice with respect to referrals and consultation. It is also important to inform patients of the process for specialist referral so they have a clear understanding of what to expect.

As the Vancouver Division continues to discuss ways to support adherence to this guideline, please remember to ensure your office forwards current patient contact information, including confirmation of the patient’s email address and permission for electronic communication, if possible.

For more information, read recently published communication from the College:

[The Referral-Consultation Process guideline must inform medical practice](#)

[Referral-Consultation Process guideline: an obligation to engage collaboratively for patients](#)