

Medical Directives for Blood Work

The Public Hospitals Act states that only a physician, dentist or midwife can write an order in a hospital. I work in a Family Health Team, and not in a hospital, so does that mean that I can order blood work for patients that I am following?

A DIETITIAN IN A FAMILY HEALTH TEAM, CAN INITIATE A REQUISITION FOR LABORATORY WORK FOR A PATIENT ONLY IF THE FAMILY HEALTH TEAM HAS A MEDICAL DIRECTIVE ESTABLISHED.

Outside of the hospital setting, there is no legislation that prohibits a dietitian from ordering lab tests but there is legislation that restricts who a medical laboratory technologist can receive orders from when performing or analyzing lab tests. The *Medical Laboratory Technology Act* prohibits medical laboratory technologists from taking blood samples from veins or by skin pricking unless the procedure is ordered by a physician, dentist, or prescribed person such as a nurse in the extended class. As well, the *Laboratory Specimen and Collection Centre Licensing Act* (LSCCLA, R.R.O. 1990, Regulation 682) indicates that medical laboratory staff can only perform analysis of specimens that have been ordered by a physician, dentist, or as permitted by regulation, for example, by a midwife or a nurse in the extended class.

A dietitian in a family health team can initiate a requisition for laboratory work for a patient only if the family health team has a medical directive established. A medical directive is an order given in advance, for a specified range of patients, under specified conditions. In these circumstances, the dietitian would not be "ordering" the laboratory work, but simply implementing the physician's order, under the authority of the medical directive.

A critical aspect in the process for the development of a medical directive is communication. In developing a medical directive:

- Obtain input from all relevant regulated health professionals and administrators.
- Ensure that all physicians whose patients will be affected by the directive approve it. The authorizing physician remains accountable for any order implemented under a medical directive.
- Contact the community laboratories most commonly used by your patients. Make sure that these laboratories are informed about the medical directive and are given the opportunity to provide input into its development. This will help to avoid a situation where a client is turned away because a front line worker is not sure what to do. Often, if you communicate with the head office of laboratories near you, they will ensure that all of their other laboratories are aware of the directive.

WHAT HAPPENS IF A PATIENT CHOOSES A LABORATORY THAT WAS NOT CONSULTED IN THE DEVELOPMENT OF THE MEDICAL DIRECTIVE?

Medical laboratory technologists have the legislated responsibility to ensure the integrity of any requisition that they receive, whether it is in the form of a direct order or a medical

directive. To ensure that your medical directive has the integrity of a direct order, it should clearly indicate the information that should appear on the requisition including:

- a statement that indicates that the order has been completed under a medical directive;
- the name of the authorizing physician, and
- the implementer (in this case, the dietitian).

With this information, medical laboratory technologist can verify the integrity of the order.

If you know that your client will be taking the requisition to another laboratory, consider attaching a copy of the directive. The *Federation of Health Regulatory Colleges of Ontario* has developed a guide with step-by-step

instructions and templates for developing medical directives which include a *Recommended Format for a Prescription or Requisition Completed Pursuant to a Directive* (see resources below)

RESOURCES

Federation of Health Regulatory Colleges of Ontario. *An Interprofessional Guide to the Use of Orders, Directives and Delegation for Regulated Health Professionals in Ontario* (2006) at: <http://www.regulatedhealthprofessions.on.ca/index.htm>

Richard Steinecke, LLB, BA and College of Dietitians of Ontario, *The Jurisprudence Handbook for Dietitians in Ontario*; Toronto, Second Edition, 2008. Online at www.cdo.on.ca > Resource Room > Publications.

College of Dietitians of Ontario, "A Primer for Developing Medical Directives." *résumé*, Winter 2004, p. 5. Online at www.cdo.on.ca, > Resource Room > Publications..

What happens when a member is suspended for non-payment of fees?

Each year, several members of the College are suspended for non-payment of fees. This means that the suspended member is not entitled to practise as a dietitian in Ontario or use the 'dietitian' title in any form.

When members are suspended, a notice of the suspension appears in *résumé* and the College informs the member's last employer on record that the member has been suspended and is no longer in good standing with the College.

The fact that a member was suspended appears indefinitely on a member's profile. As of June 2009, the law will require that all suspensions be posted on the public portion of a member's record which is accessible on the College website. The suspension information will remain on the public register indefinitely.

WHAT HAPPENS IF I LET MY MEMBERSHIP LAPSE WITHOUT ADVISING THE COLLEGE?

If you are moving to another jurisdiction or retiring and you wish to resign from the College, notify us of your resignation. If you let your membership lapse without telling us that you have retired or moved out of the province, your membership will be suspended and the fact of the suspension for non-payment of fees will be indicated indefinitely on the public record.

