



Newfoundland and Labrador Pharmacy Board

Interpretation Guide

Ending the Pharmacist – Patient Relationship

(Companion to the NLPB Code of Ethics)

Approved May 11, 2018

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1) Introduction

The Newfoundland and Labrador Pharmacy Board Code of Ethics¹ states that pharmacists must maintain a professional relationship with each patient, that their primary consideration is the health and safety of each patient, and that they must respect a patient's right to receive care.

Bearing this in mind, a pharmacist must carefully consider any decision to discontinue care and use reasonable efforts to resolve issues affecting the relationship with the patient prior to any final decision to terminate the relationship.

In the context of this document, "pharmacist-patient relationship" means either a relationship between an individual pharmacist and a patient or a relationship between several pharmacists at a practice site and a patient.

2) Expectations

2.1 A pharmacist who terminates a relationship with a patient must:

- a) have reasonable grounds² for doing so and must document those reasons in the patient record;
- b) consider their ethical obligation to continue to provide service to the patient until the transfer of care is completed;
- c) consult with the pharmacist-in-charge of the pharmacy prior to terminating the relationship to ensure that a plan exists for continuity of care if the patient is to continue to have a relationship with the pharmacy;
- d) give the patient sufficient, advance notice (either verbal and/or written) of the intention to terminate care commensurate with the continuing care needs of the patient; and

PLEASE NOTE: When determining an appropriate timeframe for notice, consideration should be given to the condition of the patient, their specific needs, and the availability of service in the community or nearby area.

- e) advise the patient of the reasons for termination of the pharmacist-patient relationship in the above verbal or written notice as well as the measures that will be taken to assist with continuity of care including any planned collaboration with the patient's physician or primary health provider (a copy or record of this communication should be retained in the pharmacy).

PLEASE NOTE: A pharmacist may determine that it is not appropriate to advise the patient of the reasons for termination if they feel that this may result in immediate and grave harm to the patient's mental or physical health or safety; threaten the mental health or physical health or safety of another individual; or pose a threat for public safety.

¹ NLPB Code of Ethics: available at: <https://nlpb.ca/media/Code-of-Ethics-Mar2021.pdf>

² The decision to terminate the pharmacist-patient relationship must not infringe a prohibited ground as described in the *Human Rights Act, 2010*: <http://www.assembly.nl.ca/Legislation/sr/statutes/h13-1.htm>

- 2.2 Notwithstanding 2.1 d) above, a pharmacist may terminate a relationship with a patient without providing notice if:
- a) the patient poses a risk to the pharmacist, pharmacy staff or other patients;
 - b) the patient fails to respect professional boundaries; or
 - c) the pharmacist is discontinuing practice at a particular practice site and the patient's care will be provided by another pharmacist on staff.
- 2.3 A pharmacist who terminates a relationship with a patient should also consider whether it is appropriate to notify other care providers within the circle of care that the pharmacist-patient relationship has been terminated.
- 2.4 If a pharmacist is uncertain whether or not it is professionally acceptable to end a pharmacist-patient relationship, they are advised to consult with the NLPB office and/or seek additional professional advice.