



**Ontario Medical Association**

**Submission to the  
College of Physicians and Surgeons  
of Ontario's Document:  
Draft Transparency Principles**

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## **OMA Submission to the College of Physicians & Surgeons of Ontario's Document: Draft Transparency Principles**

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The Ontario Medical Association welcomes the opportunity to comment on the College of Physicians and Surgeons document: Draft Transparency Principles. The matter of transparency is of tremendous importance to the OMA and we are pleased that the CPSO has undertaken a broad stakeholder consultation at each stage of this process.

The current discussion about what information a regulatory college should make available to the public must also give serious consideration to the potential for misinterpretation of limited or decontextualized information and the potential for irreparable (and unwarranted) harm to a member's reputation. We also believe that effective quality assurance, a key part of the college's role, is more effective when professionals work in an environment that respects basic expectations of privacy.

The OMA believes that transparency is useful in so far as it assists the public in making informed decisions about their health care. Information should be given to the public if it is necessary to help the public make informed decisions vis-a-vis their medical treatment. For the patient, irrelevant or decontextualized information may in fact interfere with the individual's decision-making process. For the practitioner, the publication of misleading information about practice history could have a profound effect on that individual's ability to practice. Finally, for the regulator, publishing certain pieces of information will compromise the trust that exists between itself and its members. All of these factors undermine the self-regulatory system and would do a disservice to the public.

To date, the main thrust of the transparency debate has been what *individual physician* information should be made public. However, transparency also refers to the ability of anyone, at any time, to find out what an *organization* is doing. The OMA proposes that the first step to improving transparency should involve the college making its own processes more transparent. We would argue that the public and the profession would benefit from a greater understanding about how specific decision-making processes work. This includes a clearer explanation of the processes involved in investigations, quality assurance, regulation-making, and various committee activities at the college. We believe that if the public is assured of and understands the processes at work at the college, then the college's accountability and integrity will be validated.

With those comments in mind, we turn to the draft principles. We are generally satisfied with the statements set out in the document and we particularly endorse principles 5 and 6. We offer the following specific comments:

Principle 1: We draw attention to the word "appropriate" and we propose that the word "relevant" be used instead. This change supports the notion that information provided to the public should have some direct impact on or relevance to the care that is to be provided.

Principle 2: *More* information is not necessarily required to improve patient choice. *Better* information that a patient can use to make decisions should be provided.

We support principles 3, 4, 5, 6 and 8. Under principle 5, we would add that agreements between a physician and the college often speed up the resolution of a quality assurance, complaint or disciplinary matter. These types of agreements address deficiencies while securing a solution that meets the college's responsibility of ensuring patient safety.

Principle 7: We believe this principle is vague and should be clarified. It is unclear what this statement achieves. As the CPSO points out, the most serious information is already available to the public as required by the *RHPA*. Furthermore, this principle states that "it is critical for the most important information...to be the easiest for the public to process and evaluate". We would again point out that context is critical in determining "the most important information".

The OMA looks forward to ongoing participation in the CPSO Transparency Project. Thank you for considering our comments.