

**Saskatchewan Association of Naturopathic Practitioners  
Policies and Procedures**

**Communicating About Immunization -  
*Adopted August 13, 2018***

**STANDARD**

This standard clarifies the SANP's position on responsibilities of naturopathic doctors regarding communications about immunization.

**INTRODUCTION**

Patients have a right to make decisions about their health care. Naturopathic doctors may encounter patients who are concerned about, or reluctant to obtain, immunizations for themselves or their children. Naturopathic doctors are a resource for patients and are obligated to maintain up-to-date scientific knowledge so that they may assist patients in making healthcare decisions.

**DEFINITIONS**

**Authorized practices:** the indicated activities performed as part of providing a health service that requires specific competencies and skills to be carried out safely, as defined in *The Saskatchewan Public Health Act, the Saskatchewan Immunization Manual, and in The Naturopathy Act.*

**Scope of practice:** refers to the knowledge and skills of naturopathic doctors and the comprehensive application of that knowledge and skills to assist patients. Scope of practice includes all the activities that naturopathic doctors are authorized, educated and competent to perform.

**Standard:** an authoritative statement that describes a required behaviour of every naturopathic doctor and is used to evaluate individual conduct.

**Vaccination:** the administration of a vaccine to stimulate an individual's immune system to develop adaptive immunity to a pathogen.

**Vaccine:** a substance used to stimulate the production of antibodies and provide immunity against one or several diseases, prepared from the causative agent of a disease, its products, or a synthetic substitute, treated to act as an antigen without inducing the disease

**“Anti-vaccination” counselling and/or marketing prohibited**

Naturopathic doctors **must not:**

1. Counsel a patient, and/or a patient's parents or guardians, against obtaining immunizations and/or vaccinations in the absence of a sound and properly documented medical rationale for doing so;
2. Provide patients and/or the public at large with “anti-vaccination” and/or “anti-immunization” materials or materials regarding potential risks and harms of vaccinations, whether online or in print, other than those materials that would be necessary to obtain informed consent to immunizations;

3. Feature “anti-vaccination” and/or “anti-immunization” content in their advertising and/or marketing materials, including websites and social media platforms, including but not limited to:
  - a. articles from scientific, peer-reviewed publications that have been discredited since the time of publication; and/or
  - b. other content that promotes the refusal of immunizations, vaccinations or the use of “alternatives” to immunizations or vaccinations, including materials written by third parties.

Registrants are reminded the SANP’s bylaws prohibit marketing and/or advertising that is false, inaccurate, reasonably capable of misleading the public, unverifiable, or contrary to the public interest in the practice of the profession.

Marketing is considered to violate the SANP’s bylaws and Standards of Practice if it is calculated or likely to take advantage of the weakened state, whether physical, mental or emotional, of the recipient or intended recipient, or if it is likely to create in the mind of the recipient or intended recipient an unjustified expectation about the results which the registrant can achieve.

### **ADVERTISEMENT OF “ALTERNATIVES” TO VACCINATIONS PROHIBITED**

Naturopathic doctors **must not** advertise, offer, promote, provide, or recommend alternatives to vaccinations or immunizations. Prohibited phrases include but are not limited to “flu shot alternative,” “natural flu shot,” “homeopathic vaccination,” and “natural immunization.”

### **STANDARDS OF PRACTICE FOR PATIENT CONSULTATIONS**

1. When discussing immunizations with a patient, parent or guardian, naturopathic doctors **must**:
  - a) Document the occurrence of a discussion regarding immunization within the patient’s clinical record, noting the parent or guardian’s name, if applicable;
  - b) Counsel the patient (or parent or guardian), to the best of their ability and knowledge, about the benefits and risks associated with immunization or the lack thereof, so that the patient can make an informed decision; and
  - c) Document the details of the discussion, including the rationale for providing any specific advice, within the patient’s clinical record.
2. When discussing immunizations with a patient, parent or guardian, naturopathic doctors **must convey** the following information:
  - a) Naturopathic treatments are not guaranteed to prevent the childhood diseases or infections that are targeted by vaccines;
  - b) There is an inherent risk of contracting the disease or infection if the patient is not conventionally immunized; and
  - c) Naturopathic treatment is not a substitute for the efficacy or security of an immunization.
3. When discussing immunizations with a patient, parent or guardian, naturopathic

doctors must review the vaccine information contained in the **Saskatchewan Immunization Manual**: <https://www.ehealthsask.ca/services/Manuals/Pages/SIM.aspx>.

#### **NATUROPATHIC DOCTORS DEMONSTRATE THESE STANDARDS BY:**

1. Having knowledge of the current Saskatchewan Immunization Manual and routine immunization schedules;
2. Communicating the current **Saskatchewan Immunization Manual, Chapter 5** and routine immunization schedule to patients;
3. Accurately communicating risks of infectious diseases;
4. Accurately communicating known benefits and risks of specific vaccines;
5. Clearly informing the patient that they are not authorized to give vaccinations;
6. Clearly informing the patient that naturopathic treatments are not a substitute for vaccinations;
7. Ensuring that any communications about vaccinations are in accordance with the **SANP Advertising Policy**;
8. Referring to an appropriate regulated health profession or professional to encourage further discussion about vaccinations, in accordance with the **SANP Standards of Practice Policy, and SANP Consent to Treatment Policy**;
9. Adhering to the prohibitions and requirements listed in the SANP Policies and Standards listed herein; and
10. Supporting a patient's right to choose treatment with regards to vaccinations in accordance with the **SANP Guide to Ethical Conduct**.

#### **EXPECTED OUTCOMES**

Patients are satisfied that: Naturopathic doctors are knowledgeable about the current Saskatchewan Public Health routine immunization schedule; and naturopathic doctors communicate appropriately and accurately when communicating to patients about vaccinations.

#### **RELATED DOCUMENTS**

- **SANP Guide to Ethical Conduct**
- **SANP Advertising Policy**
- **SANP Standards of Practice**
- **SANP Consent to Treatment Policy**
- *The Naturopathy Act*
- *Saskatchewan Immunization Manual, E-Health*
- *Saskatchewan Public Health Act*