

December 12, 2006

FOUR NEW REGULATED PROFESSIONS

Proposed Changes to the Regulated Health Professions Act

The McGuinty government will add four more regulated health professions under proposed changes to the *Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991* (RHPA). The changes would support the government's *HealthForceOntario* human resources strategy and help ensure that Ontarians have access to safe, quality services provided by health professionals.

The proposed changes to the RHPA are based on advice from the Health Professions Regulatory Advisory Council (HPRAC). This council's mandate is to provide independent policy advice to the Minister on matters related to the regulation of health professions in Ontario. Changes in the proposed legislation include:

- Regulating four more professions – naturopathy, homeopathy, kinesiology and psychotherapy – through three new regulatory colleges
- Enhancing services that optometrists and dental hygienists may provide so that patients have better access to services
- Enabling pharmacists to provide more comprehensive care by regulating pharmacy technicians
- Streamlining and increasing the transparency of the regulatory colleges' complaints and discipline processes

Regulating Four Additional Health Professions

The amendments to the legislation, if passed, will regulate naturopathy, homeopathy, kinesiology and psychotherapy under the RHPA. Kinesiology and psychotherapy would each be regulated by newly-created health colleges. Naturopathy and homeopathy would be jointly regulated by a single new health college. Currently, naturopaths are regulated under the *Drugless Practitioners Act*. Homeopathy, kinesiology and psychotherapy are currently unregulated.

The regulation of these health professions would provide assurances of high standards of care for Ontarians who choose these approaches to health care by:

- requiring these practitioners to meet standards and qualifications and to be accountable to a regulatory college
- delivering to patients the same protections and assurances that they receive regarding the practice of other regulated health professionals.

Naturopathy

Naturopathy is a holistic approach to health care through the integrated use of therapies and substances that promote the individual's inherent self-healing process. It is the art and science of disease assessment, treatment and prevention using naturopathic techniques. Naturopaths treat the whole person by taking into account individual physical, mental, emotional, genetic, environmental and social factors.

Naturopathy encompasses physical assessments and an array of treatments and procedures. Some of these include the use of natural medicinal preparations, lifestyle education and counselling, and manual and mechanotherapy (including moving the joints beyond the normal range of motion). Naturopaths regard nutrition, diet, lifestyle and the environment to be significant factors influencing health.

There are approximately 800 members currently registered in Ontario under the *Drugless Practitioners Act*.

Homeopathy

Homeopaths believe that human beings naturally function in a state of harmony between mind, body and spirit. This is called homeostasis. According to homeopaths, when injured, the organism will act to repair the damage. Attendant symptoms are indicative, not of ill-health, but of a process of self-correction or healing.

Homeopathy uses tiny amounts of plant, animal and mineral substances which, in a healthy person, cause the symptoms of the disease being treated. The principle that a disease with a given set of symptoms can be cured by a substance which is known to produce a similar set of symptoms is called “The Law of Similars,” and is the foundation of homeopathy.

Kinesiology

Kinesiology is the assessment of movement and function, and the rehabilitation and management of disorders to maintain and enhance movement in the areas of recreation, work, and activities of daily living.

Kinesiologists apply their skills for both preventative and rehabilitative purposes. Currently, kinesiologists work in a variety of settings, often supporting other health professionals (e.g. physiotherapists) and therefore provide services to a large variety of client populations including pediatrics, geriatrics, injured workers, motor vehicle accident clients and athletes.

Psychotherapy

Psychotherapy is often described as an intense client-therapist relationship which often involves the examination of deep emotional experiences, destructive behaviour patterns and serious mental health issues.

Psychotherapy is conducted with individuals, groups, couples and families. There are different forms or methods of psychotherapy, including psychodynamic, cognitive-behavioural and experiential. They are all ways of helping people to overcome traumatic life events, emotional problems, relationship problems or troublesome habits.

Expanding Health Care Services

The McGuinty government is also proposing legislative amendments to enhance the services optometrists, dental hygienists and pharmacists may provide, so that they can do more for their patients.

- Optometrists – The amendments would improve access to vision services and reduce wait times for the treatment of some eye conditions by permitting optometrists to prescribe selected drugs for certain conditions such as eye infections.

- Dental Hygienists – Dental hygienists, in appropriate circumstances, would be able to independently provide scaling and root planing (teeth-cleaning). This would safely expand public access to important oral health services.
- Pharmacists – Regulating pharmacy technicians would allow them to independently compound and dispense drugs, enabling pharmacists to turn their attention to providing more comprehensive patient-centred health care services to patients, their families and other health care providers with regards to drug therapy/care. It would also clarify standards and safety for pharmacy technicians.

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