



ADVERTISING GUIDELINES
OF THE
BARBADOS MEDICAL COUNCIL

2016

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INTRODUCTION

The Barbados *Medical Profession Act, 2011-1* section 23 (2) (c), states that “a medical practitioner or specialist shall not engage in any form of advertising, canvassing or promotion, either directly or indirectly, for the purpose of obtaining patients or promoting his own professional advantage that is contrary to the provisions of the Act or rules”. A medical practitioner/specialist, who breaches this section of the Act and the following advertising guidelines, is subject to disciplinary action.

These advertising guidelines, which were approved by the Barbados Medical Council on 11th September 2015, aim to guide the medical practitioner/specialist in navigating the changing climate in healthcare. They apply to all registered medical practitioners and specialists as well as individuals or companies that medical practitioners/specialists are employed by, or associated with in a professional or business capacity.

Medical practitioners/specialists are encouraged, before any publication, to seek clarification on any area in these guidelines by writing to the:

Chairman
Barbados Medical Council
Ministry of Health
Frank Walcott Building
Culloden Road
St. Michael

Or by sending an email to: medical.council@barbados.gov.bb

RELATIONSHIP OR EMPLOYMENT WITH AN INDEPENDENT ORGANIZATION

- 1.** The duty of medical practitioners or specialists belonging to or associated with an organization is to ensure that:
 - (a) the advertisement of, or promotional activities of the organization concerned are factual;
 - (b) such advertisement does not promote their personal qualities;
 - (c) advertisements do not make comparisons with the services of public health institutions or other institutions;
 - (d) patients referred to them are not provided with or attracted by misleading or promotional advertisement/information issued by the organization or its agents;
 - (e) no commission or payment is made on behalf of the organization for the referral of patients to them;
 - (f) they avoid advertising the services to be provided by them or by any group or organization to which they belong or with which they are associated.

- 2.** The names of medical practitioners or specialists may appear on notepaper, or in reports or notices issued by companies or organizations with which they are associated, but not in such a way as to promote their professional advantage over other medical practitioners/specialists.

PRACTICE NOTICES TO PATIENTS

- 3.** Medical practitioners and specialists may communicate with their own patients via practice notices. Such communications may not be distributed to the public at large.

- 4.** The notices may include information about the medical practitioner or specialist own practice arrangements (e.g. new partners) health care information (e.g. availability of flu vaccinations).

- 5.** If informing of a new doctor joining a practice, only the name, qualifications and services provided by the new doctor can be stated. Doctors going on leave may inform patients of their intentions and notify them of arrangements made for carrying on the practice.

SETTING UP A MEDICAL PRACTICE

- 6.** Not more than one notice in each local newspaper (print or electronic), once per day on radio or once per day on the television station for up to three (3) days is permissible. The notice should contain only the following information:
 - (a) full name;
 - (b) qualifications;
 - (c) area of practice or specialty in the case of a registered specialist;
 - (d) commencement date of medical practice;
 - (e) office address; and
 - (f) telephone numbers.

- 7.** The notice should be printed as an announcement not larger than 2 columns width, approximately 9cm by 5cm.

- 8.** A medical practitioner or specialist shall prior to
 - (i) establishing a medical practice; or
 - (ii) making any public announcement or publishing an announcement regarding the establishment of a medical practice,inform the Council, in writing, of his/her intention to establish a medical practice.

COMMUNICATION WITH COLLEAGUES

- 9.** A medical practitioner or specialist can communicate to other registered medical practitioners of the setting up of a practice or of the change of address of the practice.
- 10.** Limitations on the information that should be included in notifications and advertisements are as stated above. However, communications to colleagues may include specific information on the practitioner's field of practice.
- 11.** Colleagues can also be informed of the intention of a practitioner or specialist to go on leave and any relevant arrangements relating to the operation of his/her medical practice.

**DIRECTORS AND PUBLIC LISTS
(White/Yellow and promotional directories)**

- 12.** Public telephone directories listings with the names of medical practitioners and specialists, and the details of their practices are allowed as follows:
- (a) Only privately practising medical practitioners or specialists are eligible for inclusion in the 'yellow pages' and other directories of professionals.
 - (b) All registered medical practitioners are entitled to be listed in the white pages. These can include names, professional title and home address as well as telephone numbers.
 - (c) Professional association listings are allowed with the same information that can be included in public notices as well as any position associated with the organization.
 - (d) The names and particulars of health care professionals listed in such directories should be of the same size and format.

INFORMATION ON PROFESSIONAL STATIONERY

- 13.** Professional stationery, including business and appointment cards, may contain the following information:
- (a) names (including references to an incorporated company (e.g. "Dr. XYZ Incorporated"), a partnership (e.g. Dr. XYZ and Partners");
 - (b) profession;
 - (c) registered professional qualifications;
 - (d) academic qualification (other than professional qualifications) and honorary degrees in abbreviated form;
 - (e) address (es); and
 - (f) telephone number (s).
- 14.** Reference to a health care professional's achievements is not allowed. In addition to the title "doctor", a person who is permitted to use the title "professor" (even after retirement) may use it on his or her stationery.

SIGNS AND NAMEPLATES

- 15.** Individual signs and nameplates may not be larger than three (3) foot square and may contain some or all the following information:
 - (a) name (s)
 - (b) practice; i.e. general practitioner, specialty;
 - (c) an indication of the location of the practice (e.g. room number, street, number or name of the building);
 - (d) telephone number (s); and
 - (e) consulting hours.

- 16.** Only one outside sign may be used, except in the case of a large complex with more than one entrance where a sign may be place at each entrance.

- 17.** The sign should be placed on the premises where the practice is situated or at the most convenient place close to the premises.

- 18.** A nameplate may be used on the door of the consulting room.

- 19.** If an illuminated sign is used, the only source of illumination should be a constant white light.

- 20.** Only two colors of one's choice may be used on outside signs, one for background and one for lettering.

- 21.** The letters should be no more than 5 cm in height.

NAME OF PRACTICE

- 22.** Health care professionals may use as the name of practice, their own names and/or the names of their partners; directors or associates; or the name of one or of certain partners or associates or directors, together with the words "and partners", "incorporated" or " and associates", as the case may be.

MOVING PRACTICE FROM ONE LOCATION TO ANOTHER

- 23.** An announcement similar to that of when setting up a medical practice (page 4) can be used. It should be in the prescribed form as follows:
- *The Practice of Dr. E. Stone has been removed to Gall Road, St. Michael.*
- 24.** A notice may be placed outside the doctor's old address giving the name and the new address, for up to three months.
- 25.** If a new doctor moves onto the former premises, approval may be sought from that doctor for the sign to remain for the three month period.
- 26.** The medical practitioner or specialist shall inform the Secretary of the Council, in writing, of his/her intention to change the office address of his/her medical practice.

HEALTH CARE PROFESSIONALS AS AUTHORS

- 27.** In pursuit of the profession's duty to disseminate information about advances in medical science, a medical practitioner or specialist who is the author or co-author of books or articles may mention his/her own name as author or co-author, as the case maybe, and indicate his/her professional standing and institutional affiliation.

INTERVIEWS/PUBLIC SPEAKING

- 28.** A doctor being interviewed for the printed media can have his title, name, qualification and institutional affiliation printed in ordinary type. A portrait picture with a maximum size of 7.5 cm by 5 cm may be used.
- 29.** A medical practitioner or specialist with the necessary knowledge and skills may participate in the presentation and discussion of health topics by means of public addresses or through the printed or electronic media to lay audiences, provided that he does not emphasize his own professional competence or make favorable or adverse reference to the professional competence of other medical practitioners or specialists.
- 30.** A medical practitioner or specialist should not divulge details of their practices when participating in the aforementioned presentations or discussions. This may be construed as touting or canvassing for patients.
- 31.** Identification by title, name, qualification and position relevant to the purpose of the appearance is permissible.

32. A medical practitioner/specialist, in discussing subjects of non-professional nature, must take care to avoid any remarks which may be interpreted as impinging on his/her own professional practice.
33. In radio and television interviews, the doctor's name should not be given in the interview specific to his area of specialty.
34. When areas of professional practice are not being discussed then the name and title of the doctors could be used. This is the responsibility of the doctor and not the interviewer.
35. Where the doctor is being interviewed regarding the work of an organization then he/she may be identified by name and position within, or of relevance to the organization.

SOCIAL MEDIA

36. Definition: Any online and mobile tool that persons use to share opinions, information, experiences, images, and video/audio clips including websites.
37. Social media may be used to inform and where appropriate educate the practitioner's patients. In using social media, the *Medical Profession Act, 2011-1* and the *Advertising Guidelines* must be followed.
38. A clinic is allowed on its website to:
 - (a) state the services offered;
 - (b) place pictures of its doctors with their name and professional qualifications **ONLY**;
 - (c) inform of a new doctor joining the practice, [see para 3-5]; and
 - (d) use the site to provide public health information and education.



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