



Policy Update

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The integration of new technology, more informed and empowered patients and cultural shifts are changing the practice of medicine in ways not previously envisioned. As a result, the Washington Medical Commission (WMC) is constantly trying to keep up with these changes and develop policies, guidelines and interpretive statements to provide information and best practices that you may find useful in your practice. Each of these types of statements are used in specific ways by the WMC for specific reasons.

- **Policy.** A written description of the WMC's current approach to implement a statute or other provision of law, a court decision, or an order, including, where appropriate, the current best practice, procedure, or method of action based upon that approach. Policies adopted by the WMC are also reviewed by the Department of Health's Office of the Secretary.
- **Guidelines.** A set of recommended practices designed by the WMC to inform practitioners about appropriate health care for specific circumstances. A guideline does not have the force of law but may be considered by the WMC to be the standard of care in our state.
- **Interpretive Statement.** A written expression of the opinion of the WMC as to the meaning of a statute or other provision of law, of a court decision, or of an agency order.

All WMC's policies, guidelines and interpretive statements can be found on the [WMC website](#) under the "Policies & Rules" tab. Here are excerpts from some policies and guidelines you may find informative:

Self-Treatment or Treatment of Immediate Family Members. The WMC believes that practitioners generally should not treat themselves or members of their immediate families. Professional objectivity may be compromised when an immediate family member or the practitioner is the patient; the practitioner's personal feelings may unduly influence

his or her professional medical judgment, thereby interfering with the care being delivered. Read the entire policy [here](#).

Medical Records: Documentation, Access, Retention, Storage, Disposal, and Closing a Practice. The WMC provides this guidance to physicians and physician assistants (practitioners) on the appropriate documentation of a medical record; special considerations for maintaining an electronic health record; providing access to medical records; the retention, storage and disposal of medical records; and handling records when closing a practice. Read the entire guideline [here](#).

Professionalism and Electronic Media. The WMC is charged with protecting the public and upholding the standing of the profession in the eyes of the public. Therefore, it offers this guideline to assist physicians and physician assistants (practitioners) in adhering to the standards of their profession in both their personal and professional lives. The public must be able to rely on practitioners maintaining appropriate practitioner-patient boundaries. This is an essential element of medical professionalism. Read the entire guideline [here](#).

There are over 45 policies, guidelines and interpretive statements on our website. It is a great site to bookmark as we update this page regularly. Stay informed!

