

Guidelines for interpreting the principle of compassion

Purpose: This document is meant to assist pharmacists and pharmacy technicians in complying with standards 1.17-1.20 of the Standards of Practice for Pharmacists and Pharmacy Technicians (SPPPT). By extension, it applies to the guidance provided by Council regarding the provision of manufacturers' coupons in pharmacy practice. Standard 1.19 recognizes the importance of compassion in professional practice, and provides an exception to the prohibition in standard 1.18 on the provision of inducements conditional on a patient receiving a drug or a professional service that applies in defined circumstances. The exception in standard 1.19(a)(i) is not open ended. It **only** applies if specific requirements are met in relation to the circumstances of a specific patient, assessed using the professional judgement of the pharmacist providing the drug product, professional service or health care product, aid, or device to the patient. A pharmacist must exercise their professional judgement based on the unique needs and challenges of a specific individual. Standard 1.19(a) **must not** be interpreted or applied to normalize an offering to any group or population of individuals.

Definition: Compassion in pharmacy practice involves pharmacy professionals seeking to understand the needs and challenges facing an individual, and exhibiting empathy to them without judgement or stigma. This understanding is combined with a willingness to pursue and provide ethical solutions that address these needs and challenges through the practice of pharmacy.

Application:

1. A drug product, professional service, healthcare product, aid, device, or manufacturer's coupon may be provided for compassionate reasons when the decision is personalized to an individual, based on a pharmacist's assessment, and
 - a. the pharmacist has established a professional relationship with the individual or their agent;
 - b. the individual requests compassionate consideration or there is an indication of financial hardship; and
 - c. providing the drug product, professional service or health care product, aid, device, or manufacturers' coupon will improve patient health outcomes, or not providing the item or service would reasonably lead to patient harm.
2. Provision of a drug product, professional service, healthcare product, aid, device, or manufacturer's coupon for compassionate reasons should NOT
 - a. Require an obligation from the patient, implicit or explicit, to continue to receive care from the pharmacy professional.
 - b. Be undertaken to provide monetary or financial gain to the pharmacist, pharmacy technician, or the pharmacy. Consideration should be given to ensure a reasonable person would not perceive the motivation for the provision of the drug product, professional service or health care product, aid, device or manufacturers' coupon is to benefit the pharmacy professional or pharmacy.
 - c. Be mandated in a general policy that does not take into account the need for a professional relationship with the patient and consideration of the specific circumstances of the patient that warrants compassion.
 - d. Be provided for the purpose of convenience in lieu of other established social services or programs, to which the patient has reasonable access.