



September 2021

Advisory: Board for Professional Medical Conduct – COVID Virus Misinformation

COVID-19 has posed an acute healthcare emergency in New York State and far beyond over the past two years. As many lives were adversely affected and lost, we have worked diligently to learn the disease process and potential prevention/treatment protocol. The Board continues to adapt to best protect the public in this evolving crisis. The Centers for Disease Control and Prevention (CDC) and other public health agencies have worked tirelessly to share the most up-to-date information on COVID-19. The continuous update of scientifically validated information allows for responsible decision making and sound advice to the patient population. Further scientific research and education could support the efforts to address the spread of the virus and emerging variants. As new information becomes available, physicians and physician assistants are advised to review the updated scientific evidence and make adjustments as appropriate to allow us to continue to make headway in public health protection.

Health care professionals enjoy the trust of the patients and play an important role in patient education, disease prevention, and treatment in our fight against COVID-19. The doctor-patient relationship is built on the foundation of trust that the public is being advised with the most credible information to make decisions about their personal and family's healthcare. We encourage physicians and physician assistants to continue to keep themselves educated on up-to-date scientific research on this health crisis and provide responsible and medically sound advice to their patients.

The sharing of health-related information not supported by scientific evidence harms the public, hinders public health efforts to address the crisis, and severely damages the integrity of the profession. Dissemination of misinformation on social media could be particularly harmful because of the potentially broad distribution. Physicians and physician assistants should be keenly aware of the impact they have when making public statements on these platforms which are not supported by scientifically validated evidence.

The Board for Professional Medical Conduct supports the ongoing scientific research and information exchange with the intent of improving public health response to the evolving healthcare crisis. We take our responsibilities to protect the patient population and to maintain the integrity of our profession seriously as we administer the Public Health Law. We encourage all licensed physicians and physician assistants in New York State to stand with us and exercise extreme caution and responsibility against sharing misinformation.