

PRACTICE POLICIES, STATEMENTS & GUIDELINES

40-18 Self-Treatment and Treatment of Family Members or Others with Whom Significant Emotional Relationship Exists

Date Issued: 10/13/05
Date(s) Revised: 7/1/10; 2/18/16

Purpose: To clarify the Board's position regarding licensees' self-treatment and treatment of family members or others with whom significant emotional relationship exists

POLICY: Section 12-36-117(1)(x) of the Colorado Revised Statutes provides that it is unprofessional conduct and grounds for disciplinary action by the Board if a physician, physician assistant, or anesthesiologist assistant (hereinafter "licensees") prescribes, distributes or gives to a family member or to oneself, except on an emergency basis, any controlled substance as defined in Section 18-18-204, CRS, or as contained in Schedule II of 21 U.S.C., Section 812, as amended. Both of these statutory citations refer to Schedule II controlled substances. Although not specifically prohibited by law, the Colorado Medical Board ("Board") also discourages licensees from prescribing or dispensing other controlled substances to family members or others with whom significant emotional relationships exist for the reasons set forth below.

In addition, it is the position of the Board that, except for minor illnesses and emergencies, licensees should not treat, medically or surgically, or prescribe for themselves, their family members or others with whom they have significant emotional relationships. The Board strongly believes that such treatment and prescribing practices are inappropriate and may result in less than optimal care being provided. A variety of factors, including personal feelings and attitudes that inevitably color judgment, may compromise the objectivity of the licensee and make the delivery of sound medical care problematic in such situations. True patient autonomy and informed consent may also be sacrificed.

When an emergency or a minor illness requires self-treatment or treatment of a family member or other person with whom the licensee has a significant emotional relationship, the Board recommends that the licensee prepare and keep a proper written record of that treatment including, but not limited to, prescriptions written and the medical indications for those prescriptions.

Except as set forth above, the Board expects licensees to delegate the medical and surgical care of themselves, their families and those with whom they have significant emotional relationships to other healthcare professionals in order to ensure appropriate and objective care is provided and to avoid misunderstandings related to their prescribing practices.