

Artificial Intelligence Use in HCA Practice

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INTRODUCTION

The College of Licensed Practical Nurses and Health Care Aides of Alberta (CLHA) has the **authority** under the Health Professions Act (HPA) to carry out its activities and **govern** its Health Care Aides (HCAs)* in a manner that protects and serves the public interest.

Artificial Intelligence (AI) is impacting health professionals, their practices, and their clients. AI may be used as a tool to support decision-making during care, documentation, and other tasks. The use of AI may create challenges in providing **ethical care** regarding **accountability, confidentiality, privacy**, and client safety. HCAs are responsible for following applicable legislation, CLHA standards of practice, code of ethics, and employer requirements when using AI.

Terms found in the definition section are **bolded** where they appear for the first time in the document.

PURPOSE

This practice guideline provides HCAs with knowledge and guidance on using AI **responsibly**. It aims to support HCAs while maintaining client safety, privacy, and confidentiality.

DISCUSSION OF EVIDENCE

Generative Versus Predictive AI

Identifying the different types of AI allows HCAs to understand when it could be used. Two different kinds of AI need to be considered.

1. Generative AI: **algorithms** or **models** that use existing **data** to create new content, such as images, audio, video, text, or software code. Examples of using generative AI include ChatGPT, CoPilot, Gemini, etc.¹
2. Predictive AI: does not create new content but provides **statistical analysis** or predictions about outcomes or **trends** to help decision-making. This type of AI is common and is being used in different technologies. An example of predictive AI is an

* In this document, "HCA(s)" has the same meaning as "regulated member(s)" in the *Health Professions Act*.

electronic medical record that uses AI to “flag when client information is accessed in ways that appear inappropriate.”²

Many software applications and programs do not tell the user when AI is being applied, or what factors are considered when creating the results. This lack of transparency can lead to confusion about how AI technology may influence how decisions are made. Regardless of the technology HCAs use, they are expected to continue protecting a client’s right to confidentiality, privacy, and safety.

INFORMED PRACTICE

The *Standards of Practice for HCAs in Alberta* outline several responsibilities that are directly applicable to the use of AI in practice.

Standards of Practice for HCAs in Alberta

HCAs must:

- 1.1 Practice within applicable legislation, regulations, by-laws, and employer requirements.
- 1.8 Be accountable and responsible for their own professional conduct and ethical decision-making when collaborating with others.
- 2.1 Carry out a client’s plan of care within the defined HCA role in collaboration with the healthcare team.
- 2.5 Promote and contribute to positive health outcomes for clients within a culture of safe practice.
- 4.3. **Respect** and protect clients’ rights to **autonomy**, confidentiality, **dignity**, privacy, respect, and access to care.

HCAs are required to follow their standards of practice. To learn more about professional responsibility, please see the *Standards of Practice for HCAs in Alberta* and the HCA *Professional Responsibility and Accountability* policy.

HCA-Client Relationship

AI use in healthcare is transforming client care rapidly. This technological shift raises concerns about healthcare becoming less personal and how the emphasis on AI might overshadow the importance of connection, empathy, trust, and personalized care traditionally provided by humans.³

AI tools do not replace human decision-making or the connection between the HCA and the client. HCAs make a connection with their client based on trust, respect, and empathy, and have the option of using AI to enhance the delivery of care when it is needed.

Client Safety

AI has many practical applications, including gathering information from a source, answering a question, and documenting client interactions. HCAs must follow their code of ethics, standards of practice, and employer requirements at all times, including when using AI.

HCAs are advised to address any concerns the client might have about the potential impact of using AI or refer the client to their supervisor before using the tool. This will enhance transparency, collaboration, and promote the safety of their privacy and information.

If AI can't find information on a topic, it may create an incorrect response, leading to inconsistencies or errors that could harm the client.⁴ HCAs are advised to inform their supervisors of any results.

Regardless of the technology an HCA uses, they are responsible and accountable for their decisions made while practicing, their use of AI tools, and the client's well-being.

Privacy and Confidentiality

HCAs are responsible for keeping client information private and confidential. HCAs need to confirm if an AI tool has been approved for use by their employer, follow their employer's requirements, and report any potential privacy **breaches** as soon as possible.

Please see the HCA *Confidentiality* practice guideline and the HCA *Privacy Legislation in Alberta* interpretive document to learn more about the responsibilities of HCAs related to client privacy and confidentiality.

Ethical Care

Clients have the right to know and make decisions about their healthcare. This includes understanding how AI may affect their care, including how their data or information is used.

Biases are an example of an ethical care challenge that an HCA might encounter. AI may contain flaws and biases that can be harmful and could negatively influence AI results. An HCA can ask their employer or supervisor how to identify biases and how they can affect the care the HCA is providing.⁵

Please see the *Code of Ethics for Health Care Aides in Alberta* to read more about an HCA's professional values to which they are accountable.

Accountability For Use of AI

HCAs "are accountable and responsible for their own practice, conduct, and ethical decision-making."⁶ This statement applies to HCA practice, including when using AI. HCAs should seek the appropriate education to understand the risks of using AI products, including security, privacy, and confidentiality. HCAs should only use employer-approved AI products.

HCA's should always ensure they work within their scope of practice, follow employer requirements, and notify their supervisor or the most responsible healthcare provider of any concerns.

Clinical Notes

Accurate documentation helps inform the client's healthcare team of potential changes to the client's condition and aids in decision-making, which promotes client safety.

HCA's are accountable for having accurate documentation and should review clinical notes or documentation that is created or assisted by AI for accuracy, while also following their employer's requirements. Errors or mistakes in recorded information can lead to potential **unprofessional conduct**.

CONCLUSION

HCA's are responsible and accountable for their decisions made during practice, their use of AI, and their impact on the client's well-being and safety. They should also be aware of their AI tools and protect client information while following applicable legislation, regulations, and employer requirements.

Documents are updated frequently. For the most current version and access to related documents and resources, please visit the Knowledge Hub on clha.com.

If after reading this document you have questions, please contact the CLHA's Professional Practice Team via practice@clha.com or 780-484-8886 or 1-800-661-5877 (toll free in Alberta).

DEFINITIONS

Accountability: the duty to answer for the professional, legal, and ethical responsibilities of one's actions.⁷

Algorithms: a set of instructions or data that technology, such as computers, learn to solve a problem.⁸

Artificial intelligence (AI): when computers and other forms of technology are able to act and problem-solve similarly to human beings.

Authority: refers to the power or right to give orders, make decisions, and enforce obedience. It can also mean the appropriate person to give orders or make decisions.

Autonomy: the ability to make choices and decisions according to one's own values and preferences. These choices can be made with support if necessary.⁹

Biases: the action of supporting or opposing a particular person or thing unfairly by allowing your personal opinions to influence your judgment.¹⁰ Biases can influence how individuals, groups, or ideas are perceived or interacted with. AI tools can be biased because of the information they are fed, how they are programmed, or the way it is asked a question.

Breaches: breaking or failing to follow a law, agreement, contract, policy, or code of ethics. For example, if an HCA discusses their client's medical history with another HCA that is not on the healthcare team, this would be a breach of confidentiality.

Confidentiality: the ethical duty to protect personal and health information about a client.

Data: information, especially facts or numbers, collected to be examined, considered and used to help make decisions.

Dignity: the right of a person to be valued and respected.

Ethical Care: providing care to clients while upholding moral beliefs and values.

Govern: to lead, control, or manage an organization or group, often by creating rules and making decisions that guide their actions.

Models: an AI model is a program that has been trained on a set of data to recognize certain patterns or make certain decisions without human input. AI models apply different algorithms to related data points to achieve the tasks they've been programmed for.¹¹

Privacy: the right of a client to have some control over how their personal information or personal health information is collected, used, accessed or disclosed.

Respect: means treating clients and their families with dignity, considering their personal choices, and ensuring they have control over their own care while keeping their private information safe.

Responsibly: having good judgment and the ability to act correctly.

Statistical analysis: the process of examining data to draw conclusions or insights and determine cause-and-effect patterns between events.

Unprofessional conduct: according to the HPA, unprofessional conduct includes actions and behaviours that reflect poorly on the HCA profession. Unprofessional conduct includes displaying a lack of knowledge, skill or judgment to provide professional services, not following the HCA standards of practice and code of ethics, or any other behaviour that is defined as unprofessional conduct under section 1(1) of the HPA.

Trends: the direction that something is going or is expected to go over a period of time.

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