

Recent amendments to the controlled act of psychotherapy for nursing

February 28, 2020

In December 2017, psychotherapy was proclaimed a controlled act under Ontario's Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991 (RHPA). Controlled acts are activities that are considered potentially harmful to patients if performed by unqualified individuals. Health profession Acts, such as the Nursing Act or Medicine Act, 1991, and other legislative mechanisms, identify which individuals are authorized to perform each of the controlled acts listed in the RHPA. The RHPA contains a number of exceptions that permit individuals who are not members of a regulated health profession to perform controlled acts under specific circumstances, as set out in section 29(1). These exceptions include, for example, performing controlled acts in an emergency.

The Ontario legislature's proclamation of psychotherapy as a controlled act was implemented along with a two-year transition period. During this time, individuals performing psychotherapy as set out in section 27(2) of the RHPA could register with one of the regulatory colleges authorized to perform psychotherapy in order to continue to perform this act after December 31, 2019, in accordance with their professional regulations.

Amendments to O. Reg. 275/94 (General) under the Nursing Act were proposed prior to the end of the two-year transition period and took effect on January 1, 2020. These recent amendments enable registered nurses to continue to initiate the controlled act of psychotherapy if they meet the conditions of the regulation, without an order by a physician or nurse practitioner. The amendments also authorize registered practical nurses to initiate the controlled act of psychotherapy. Delegation of this controlled act by registered nurses and registered practical nurses remains unauthorized.

To perform the controlled act of psychotherapy independently, a nurse must be satisfied that:

- a. he/she has the requisite knowledge, skill and judgment to perform the procedure safely, effectively and ethically;
- b. **he/she has the knowledge, skill and judgment to determine whether the patient's condition warrants performance of the procedure and in that case has determined that the patient's condition warrants such performance of the procedure;** and

- c. he/she accepts accountability for determining whether the patient’s condition warrants performance of the procedure.

These requirements are described more fully in subsection 15(5) and 15.1(3) of O. Reg. 275/95 (General) to the Nursing Act.

From a practical perspective, a nurse’s authority to independently initiate the controlled act of psychotherapy remains subject to the organizational policies that are in place in the nurse’s practice setting, which may further restrict or dictate the manner in which a nurse can initiate the controlled act. In addition, legislative requirements in the Public Hospitals Act and its regulations may make it such that nurses working in a public hospital may continue to require an order from a physician or nurse practitioner to perform the controlled act of psychotherapy, when such constitutes treatment.

By

[Émilie Roy](#)

Expertise

[Health Care, Health Regulatory](#)

BLG | Canada’s Law Firm

As the largest, truly full-service Canadian law firm, Borden Ladner Gervais LLP (BLG) delivers practical legal advice for domestic and international clients across more practices and industries than any Canadian firm. With over 725 lawyers, intellectual property agents and other professionals, BLG serves the legal needs of businesses and institutions across Canada and beyond – from M&A and capital markets, to disputes, financing, and trademark & patent registration.

blg.com

BLG Offices

Calgary

Centennial Place, East Tower
520 3rd Avenue S.W.
Calgary, AB, Canada
T2P 0R3

T 403.232.9500
F 403.266.1395

Ottawa

World Exchange Plaza
100 Queen Street
Ottawa, ON, Canada
K1P 1J9

T 613.237.5160
F 613.230.8842

Vancouver

1200 Waterfront Centre
200 Burrard Street
Vancouver, BC, Canada
V7X 1T2

T 604.687.5744
F 604.687.1415

Montréal

1000 De La Gauchetière Street West
Suite 900
Montréal, QC, Canada
H3B 5H4

T 514.954.2555
F 514.879.9015

Toronto

Bay Adelaide Centre, East Tower
22 Adelaide Street West
Toronto, ON, Canada
M5H 4E3

T 416.367.6000
F 416.367.6749

The information contained herein is of a general nature and is not intended to constitute legal advice, a complete statement of the law, or an opinion on any subject. No one should act upon it or refrain from acting without a thorough examination of the law after the facts of a specific situation are considered. You are urged to consult your legal adviser in cases of specific questions or concerns. BLG does not warrant or

guarantee the accuracy, currency or completeness of this publication. No part of this publication may be reproduced without prior written permission of Borden Ladner Gervais LLP. If this publication was sent to you by BLG and you do not wish to receive further publications from BLG, you may ask to remove your contact information from our mailing lists by emailing unsubscribe@blg.com or manage your subscription preferences at blg.com/MyPreferences. If you feel you have received this message in error please contact communications@blg.com. BLG's privacy policy for publications may be found at blg.com/en/privacy.

© 2024 Borden Ladner Gervais LLP. Borden Ladner Gervais LLP is an Ontario Limited Liability Partnership.