

**Department Of Health
Health Professions Quality Assurance Division
Washington State Board of Osteopathic Medicine and Surgery
Interpretative Statement**

Title:	Prescribing Medication without Physician/Patient Relationship	Number: OP99-27
Reference:	Board minutes: November 19, 1999; March 24, 2000; June 2, 2000; January 26, 2001; September 26, 2014	
Contact:	Program Manager	
Effective Date:	January 26, 2001; Modified September 26, 2014	
Supersedes:	June 2, 2000	
Approved:	Board	
Signature Board Chair	Mark Hunt, D.O.	

Interpretative Statement:

The Board of Osteopathic Medicine and Surgery has been given the responsibility of licensing and disciplining osteopathic physicians and physician assistants in the state of Washington. This charge includes the protection of the health, welfare and safety of the citizens of the state.

The Board has become aware of the issue of practitioners treating patients over the Internet. The Board has determined that basic principles of osteopathic medical practice be utilized regardless of the practice setting. Therefore, the Board requires a proper physician-patient relationship be established before commencing any treatment, including the prescribing of any dangerous drugs or controlled substances. A proper relationship, at a minimum, requires:

- 1) A reasonable attempt to verify of the person for whom the physician is prescribing medication;
- 2) Establishing a diagnosis through the use of accepted medical practices such as a patient history, mental status exam, physical examination, appropriate diagnostic and laboratory testing, and/or maintaining adequate records of exams, tests and findings;
- 3) Discussing with the patient the diagnosis and the evidence for it, the risks and benefits of various treatment options; and
- 4) Ensuring availability of the physician or coverage for the patient for appropriate follow-up care.

It is inappropriate and unprofessional to prescribe drugs based solely on answers to a questionnaire filled out by an individual the physician has never met, as is common in Internet or toll-free telephone prescribing.

Prescribing without personally examining the patient may only be suitable under certain circumstances including, but not limited to, admission orders for newly hospitalized patients, prescribing for a

patient of another physician for whom the prescriber is taking call, or continuing medication on a short-term basis for a new patient prior to the patient's first appointment.

Action:

Follow approved Health Systems Quality Assurance policies and procedures for processing complaints and taking disciplinary action.