

COLLÈGE DES MÉDECINS DU QUÉBEC

Practising medicine  
during training as a  
resident in Quebec:  
Avoiding role  
confusion

2021



Given the risk of confusion of roles by other health care professionals when a resident is practising medicine while continuing training, the Collège issues these recommendations for preventive purposes. In this regard, to ensure patient safety, the resident's role as a learner must be clearly distinguished from their role as an attending physician or the most responsible physician. These distinct roles are quite different, and it is therefore vital that they are understood and taken into account by the health care teams and teaching staff, as well as by patients.

For example, it is not recommended that a resident be a learner from Monday to Friday and then a practising doctor on weekends within the same facility.

Alternating these two types of roles within a short period of time too often may lead to incomplete integration of this information among health care teams. For example, a nurse could incorrectly consider the resident as an attending physician for a longer period of time than expected, which may lead to negative consequences for the patient's care (e.g. when prescribing medication). This also applies to pharmacists who need to process some prescriptions differently depending on the role of the prescriber.

The following recommendations help reduce the risk of role confusion for patients, caregivers, and other learners or supervisors. They maximize patient safety and even the professional safety of residents.

## **Residents and fellows affected by these measures**

The recommendations listed below apply to residents, but also to fellows that:

- have applied for and obtained a permit to practice and a specialist's certificate from the Collège des médecins du Québec, often in a basic specialty (primary), such as internal medicine, pediatrics, psychiatry, or family medicine;
- are duly registered on the Roll of our Order;
- are simultaneously pursuing training as a learner with a training card in an additional specialty (most often a Royal College subspecialty or an area of advanced skills in family medicine).

## List of the Collège's recommendations

The residents (and fellows) concerned cannot practise in the same facilities as those concurrently used for their training as a learner.

There must be no overlapping period between the resident's practice and training within the same facility.

The resident must ensure that their roles as attending physician and learner do not conflict with each other, and that health care teams as well as supervisors, other attending physicians, university doctors, learners, and especially patients, do not confuse these roles.

For these reasons, the resident must ensure that they correctly identify themselves with patients by specifying their role as a learner and obtain the patient's free and informed consent to receive care by a learner, as outlined in the guide on the [Role and Responsibilities of the Learner and the Supervisor](#).

The resident must also ensure that their role as attending physician does not conflict with their training in terms of availability for their clinical and on-call duties as a learner or with their academic duties.

Depending on whether the resident is performing their role as an attending physician or as a learner, the appropriate permit number (either the permit number or the R number on the training card) is mandatory in records, on prescriptions, and when writing notes.

Any alternation of roles within the same facility must be spaced over a sufficient period of time to avoid confusion of role by health care teams and teaching staff as well as with patients. Training periods must be completed before assuming a new role within the same facility.

A resident practising as a licensed physician must also meet the requirements of the Collège's Continuing Professional Development (CPD) program and any other requirements for practising physicians, which includes holding professional liability insurance appropriate for a physician in practice and which is independent of that required for resident status.

For further information or any questions, please contact the Collège's Director of Medical Education by e-mail at [demandepermis@cmq.org](mailto:demandepermis@cmq.org).