

09 Mar 2021

To: Patients of Dr. Sigmund

From: Dr. Sigmund

RE: Leave of absence

Summary of key points:

- 1) I require an extended leave of absence from my general practice.
- 2) This transition is **effective immediately**.
- 3) During this transition, **I will continue to be available as much as possible for patients with duplicate prescriptions; complex care needs (including in the mental health domain); or other issues that similarly potentiate barriers to accessing appropriate care elsewhere.**
- 4) Nevertheless, **all patients**, including the vulnerable patients referenced above, **should be trying to find a new family doctor ASAP** while also further familiarizing themselves with contingency ("*back-up*") care options and resources (especially considering the uncertainty of the extent of my ongoing availability).
- 5) **For guidance in finding a new family doctor and accessing care in the meantime, please see the last section/portion of this document with the heading "*Care options and resources, by Dr. Sigmund, revised March 10 2021.*"**
- 6) **I will do my best to support appropriate follow-up with pending investigations and outstanding issues** in general (this is further detailed on *page 3* of this document), but **it is still important for patients to ensure timely review/reassessment of issues via the resource referenced above in 5).**
- 7) You can **request access/transfer of your medical records following the process outlined on *page 4*** of this document.

Further details:

Dear patients,

As explained in my previous correspondence (dated February 22nd, 2021), unexpected family health issues necessitated a reduction in my general availability as part of the ongoing process of prioritizing patient issues based on urgency; complexity; and related barriers in accessing care.

Moreover, in my February 22nd letter I explained that the uncertainty around the timeline of this limitation in my availability was such that I encouraged the pursuit of alternate care arrangements that included finding a new family doctor. In terms of a clarifying update, **I would advise even more strongly that you expedite and prioritize this process of finding a new family doctor as I will be transitioning to an extended leave of absence from my work as a full-scope family physician.**

Given the dynamic and unpredictable nature on both the professional and personal fronts (with the family health responsibilities), **the length of my leave of absence in this capacity is uncertain.** Moreover, when it becomes possible for me to resume full-time general working hours for appointments, the specific distribution of these hours will depend on the state of our health care system at that time in terms of the areas of greatest need. Accordingly, **I may not return to full-time hours in a traditional family medicine practice.**

My transition to an **extended leave of absence is effective immediately**. However, I will **continue working as much possible during this transition**, seven days a week at times, **in a capacity that is limited to focus on contributing in the following ways:**

- 1) calling patients or otherwise helping to follow-up on outstanding reports or test results*);
- 2) connecting with vulnerable patients with duplicate prescriptions (e.g., methadone) to support continuity of care;
- 3) arranging follow-up for active issues to the best of my ability (with a focus on prioritizing the most significant such issues and in the most complex or otherwise vulnerable patients);**
- 4) being readily available to communicate with pharmacists and other colleagues to support continuity of care and effective practice transitions (I even set-up a designated direct phone line I give out to pharmacists/colleagues for this purpose);

and

- 5) maintaining patient records while further streamlining the process by which patients may request access to these records and/or have them transferred to a new practice.

****** Patients should not wait to be contacted or otherwise delay follow-up for results/issues that are even remotely time-sensitive.***

Expanding on 5), **you may access and/or transfer your electronic medical records by sending this request in any of the following ways:**

- I. **Email:**
doctor.sigmund.medical.records@gmail.com

- II. **Fax:**
(604) 914-2555

- III. **Mail:**
DR. ERIC M. SIGMUND INC.
5307 Victoria Drive #360, Vancouver, B.C., V5P 3V6

As per the framework outlined in the *Doctors of BC Guide for Fees for Uninsured Services*, **an administrative fee of \$37.40 will apply** to a single transfer of electronic medical records, with further fees for additional/special requests (e.g., printing, courier service, etc.). Methods of payment will be clarified at the time of a request.

If you cannot afford the \$37.40 fee, please make note of this with your request so that I can do my best to transfer your electronic medical records at no charge.

For guidance in finding a new family doctor and accessing interim care, please review the document I prepared with the title “*Care options and resources, by Dr. Sigmund, revised March 10 2021*” included below as an addendum.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Eric Sigmund', written in a cursive style.

Dr. Eric Sigmund, M.D., C.C.F.P.



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Care Options/Resources

➤ Pathways BC Virtual Care Directory

- North Vancouver clinics/doctors accepting new patients:

www.pathwaysmedicalcare.ca/?s=North+Vancouver&post_types=division

- For patients outside of North Vancouver, the more general resource (for family doctors accepting new patients) is

www.PathwaysBCVirtualCare.ca

This also outlines walk-in/telehealth clinics and many other resources.

- If you don't have internet access, you may **dial 8-1-1** to connect with a **Health Service Navigator** to help with exploring the above options; this is further explained on the next page.

➤ Important numbers

The following numbers are worth memorizing:

- **9-1-1**

Dial 9-1-1 without delay if you or someone in your care has chest pains, difficulty breathing, severe bleeding, or other potentially life-threatening emergency.

- **8-1-1**

Call 8-1-1 to connect with a *Health Service Navigator*

- Available 24/7: navigators are there for you, every hour, and every day.

- They can provide you with health information and help you navigate the health care system to find services across the province:

- Mental Health Services
- Alcohol and Drug/Addiction Services (including the BC Take Home Naloxone Program)
- Clinics with extra supports and expertise to help you get well. Examples of such clinics include the following:

- ❖ **Health Connection Clinic**

“For complex medical, mental health and addictions, and/or socio-economic needs (like housing, income, and access to food).”

- ❖ **Foundry North Shore (ages 12-24)**

“Foundry North Shore offers young people 12-24 access to mental health and substance use support, primary care, peer support and social services.”

211 W. 1st Street, North Vancouver

604-984-5060

foundrynorthshore@vch.ca

- ❖ **Stepping Stones Concurrent Disorders Service**

“Offers support to individuals experiencing both a mental illness and substance use issue, to stabilize their health and establish a path toward long-term improvements in functioning.”

145 West 17th Street,

North Vancouver

604-982-5616

❖ **VCH Urgent and Primary Care Centres**

“Urgent and Primary Care Centres (UPCC) are for people with same-day, non-life-threatening injuries and illnesses when you are unable to see a family doctor or health care provider.”

For life-threatening illnesses or injuries, call 911 or go to the Emergency Department to be assessed and treated immediately.

> **North Vancouver Urgent and Primary Care Centre**

221 West Esplanade, Suite 200, 2nd Floor,
North Vancouver
Phone: (604) 973-1600

> **City Centre Urgent Primary Care**

Centre: 1290 Hornby Street, Ground
Floor, Vancouver
Phone: (604) 416-1811

> **REACH Urgent and Primary Care Centre:**

1145 Commercial Drive,
Vancouver
Phone: (604) 216-3138

➤ **Other useful numbers**

▪ **310 Mental Health Support**

310-6789 (no area code needed)

“for emotional support, information and resources specific to mental health.”

▪ **1-800-SUICIDE**

1-800-784-2433

“if you are considering suicide or are concerned about someone who may be.”

▪ **Kid’s Help Phone**

1-800-668-6868

“to speak to a professional counsellor, 24 hours a day.”

▪ **Alcohol & Drug Information and Referral Service**

1-800-663-1441 (toll-free in B.C.) or

604-660-9382 (in the Lower Mainland)

“...to find resources and support.”