

## Maine Board of Osteopathic Licensure

### **Board Position Statement on COVID-19 Misinformation**

In recent months, considerable attention has been focused on the misinformation and unprofessional conduct related to the prevention, treatment and discussion of COVID-19.

Recently, the Federation of State Medical Boards (FSMB) issued a position statement regarding Covid-19 vaccine misinformation due to the significant increase in disinformation among physicians and health care providers. It reads as follows:

*Physicians who generate and spread COVID-19 vaccine misinformation and disinformation are risking disciplinary action by state medical boards, including suspension or revocation of their medical license. Due to their specialized knowledge and training, licensed physicians possess a high degree of public trust and therefore have a powerful platform in society, whether they recognize it or not. They also have an ethical and professional responsibility to practice medicine in the best interests of their patients and must share information that is factual, scientifically grounded and consensus-driven for the betterment of public health. Spreading inaccurate COVID-19 vaccine information contradicts that responsibility, threatens to further erode public trust in the medical profession and puts all patients at risk.*

Further, organizations such as the American Board of Family Medicine (“ABFM”), The American Board of Internal Medicine (“ABIM”), and the American Board of Pediatrics (“ABP”) issued joint statements in support of the FSMB’s position. <https://www.abim.org/media-center/press-releases/joint-statement-on-dissemination-of-misinformation/>

The American Osteopathic Association (AOA) reports their guidance on COVID-19 from recognized authorities such as the CDC for public health and epidemiological recommendations. <https://osteopathic.org/practicing-medicine/providing-care/covid-19-resources/>

The Maine Board of Osteopathic Licensure supports the position taken by the FSMB regarding COVID-19 vaccine and disease misinformation spread by physician and physician assistants. The positions and statements of all the above-named entities, grounded in science, guide the Board as it executes its duty to protect the public, investigate complaints, and regulate its professional licensees. Physicians and physician assistants who spread COVID-19 misinformation, or practice based on misinformation, endanger patients and erode the public trust in the medical profession.

COVID-19 is a disease process which osteopathic licensees should evaluate and treat in the same manner as any other disease process. Assessments and treatments of COVID-19 by these licensees will be evaluated by the Board in the same manner it evaluates assessments and treatments of any other disease process. Treatments and recommendations regarding COVID-19 that fall below the standard of care established by medical experts and legitimate medical research are potentially subject to disciplinary action. Similarly, if a licensee who issues a vaccination exemption without conducting an appropriate examination and without finding a legitimate medical reason supporting such exemption within the standard of care may be placing their license at risk of disciplinary action.

Members of the public and medical professionals are encouraged to contact the Board when they feel unprofessional conduct has occurred or the standard of care has been breached.

*Melissa J Michaud, PA-C, Chair*

*Maine Board of Osteopathic Licensure*