

**ILLINOIS STATE MEDICAL SOCIETY**

**Resolution 08.2022-13  
(A-23)**

Introduced by: Philip Dray, MD, ISMS Member

Subject: Colonics, Colonic Irrigation and Colonic Hydrotherapy

Referred to: Council on Medical Service

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1           Whereas, there are non-medical lay people that offer to perform the procedure  
2 commonly known as colonics, colonic irrigation and colonic hydrotherapy in their  
3 business office to the general public; and  
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5           Whereas, these non-medical lay people commonly designate themselves as  
6 "therapist or colon hygienists" or similar sounding quasi-medical professional  
7 designation; and  
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9           Whereas, there are often conflicting and confusing descriptions of the "benefits"  
10 claimed on websites by the business and the individual performing the colonic, including  
11 "removal of toxins and/or detoxification" or "feeling better" or help in the "healing  
12 process" or include terms such as "wellness" in the name of their organization, all which  
13 imply a health benefit; and  
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15           Whereas, the *Statement on Prohibited Practices* put out by the IDFPR designates  
16 colonics as prohibited as the practice of medicine unless "there is no representation of  
17 health benefits..."; and  
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19           Whereas, there is no valid scientific evidence supporting colonics as a  
20 mechanism to improve health in any manner or its use to "detoxify" the body; and  
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22           Whereas, the colonic may introduce dozens of liters of fluid into the colon that  
23 may be combined intentionally or unintentionally with other foreign substances or  
24 contaminants which may provoke medical complications or an allergic reaction; and  
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26           Whereas, there are substantial risks involved in performing a colonic including:  
27 cramping, abdominal pain, nausea, vomiting, dehydration, perianal irritation, rectal tear,  
28 infection, altered electrolyte and fluid balance, heart failure, altered balance of intestinal  
29 flora, overgrowth of harmful colon flora, parasitic infections, abscesses, kidney  
30 insufficiency, pancreatitis and death; and

31           Whereas, there are significant contraindications to performing the colon  
32 irrigation including early forms of disease yet to be recognized by the client and other  
33 occult contraindications that will not be known to the client which include: ulcerative  
34 colitis, diverticular disease, Crohn's disease, hemorrhoids, kidney insufficiency, CHF  
35 and intestinal cancer; and

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37           Whereas, the FDA does not approve the devices that are used for colon cleansing;  
38 and

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40           Whereas, the lay practitioners are not licensed by a scientifically based  
41 organization, the procedure is performed in a non-medical setting, there is no oversight  
42 organization for standards of safety, cleanliness or sterilization and the lay person  
43 performing the procedure may touch the client, press on or massage the abdomen of the  
44 client; therefore, be it

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46           RESOLVED, that ISMS undertake a public information and education campaign  
47 including a policy statement available on the ISMS website that states that there is no  
48 scientific evidence or basis that colonics, colonic irrigation and colonic hydrotherapy  
49 has any health benefit and that there are significant dangers including multiple medical  
50 complications and death to having the procedure performed upon oneself; and be it  
51 further

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53           RESOLVED, that the ISMS support the position and communicate to the IDFPR  
54 that the performance of colonics, colonic irrigation and colonic hydrotherapy is the  
55 practice of medicine and a medical procedure in all circumstances with all its associated  
56 risks; and be it further

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58           RESOLVED, that ISMS support the position and communicate to the IDFPR  
59 that, colon cleansing is a medical procedure without a health benefit or medical  
60 indication and must be designated in the category of a "cosmetic medical procedure"  
61 and a trained medical professional must be present that has within their scope of practice,  
62 the medical credentials to perform such a procedure only within a medical setting, keep  
63 HIPAA compliant medical records, and perform follow up exams as needed.

**References:**

<https://idfpr.illinois.gov/Forms/DPR/BCENTProcedures10142016.pdf>

Statement on Prohibited Practices The Department of Financial and Professional Regulation, Division of Professional Regulation, frequently receives inquiries regarding whether certain procedures can be performed by a cosmetologist or an esthetician within the scope of their licensure. While the Department does not issue “advisory opinions”

or dispense legal advice, the public's interest in these procedures merits this statement from the Department. Parties seeking a legal opinion should consult with their own attorney. Cosmetologists and estheticians are prohibited from using any technique, product, or practice intended to affect the living layers of the skin. (Barber, Cosmetology, Esthetics, Hair Braiding and Nail Technology Act of 1985; 225 ILCS 410/3-1 and 410/3A-1.) The following procedures constitute the practice of medicine (with the exception of colonics provided there is no representation of health benefits and microblading) and are not within the scope of practice of a cosmetologist or an esthetician: • Botox; • Chemical peels; • Collagen injections; • Colonics; • Liposuction; and • Microdermabrasion, except superficial or light microdermabrasion intended to only remove dead skin cells, oil, and other debris from the surface of the skin. • Dermaplaning • Microblading • Microneedling • Radio Frequency In the event that any of the above procedures are delegated by a licensed physician, an individual may not hold himself or herself out as a cosmetologist or an esthetician while performing the delegated procedure. An individual may not indicate in any manner that Illinois Department of Financial and Professional Regulation Division of Professional Regulation BRUCE RAUNER Governor BRYAN A. SCHNEIDER Secretary JESSICA BAER Acting Director Division of Professional Regulation any such procedure delegated by a licensed physician is part of the practice of cosmetology or esthetics. The person receiving services must be a patient of the physician (there must be a physician-patient relationship), the physician must examine the patient and determine the appropriateness and the course of treatment, and the person receiving the physician delegation must carry out the course of treatment as instructed

Clinical effects of colonic cleansing for general health promotion: a systematic review  
<https://pubmed.ncbi.nlm.nih.gov/19724266/>

6 reasons doctors say to avoid colon cleanses  
<https://www.cbc.ca/news/health/colonics-colon-cleanses-doctor-warning-hydrotherapy-1.4543340>

The Danger of Colon Cleansing  
<https://www.mdedge.com/familymedicine/article/64413/gastroenterology/dangers-colon-cleansing/page/0/2#bib19>

Colon Cleanse: Health or Hype?  
<https://www.mdanderson.org/publications/focused-on-health/FOH-colon-cleansing.h12-1589835.html>

Escherichia coli Septic Shock after Colonic Hydrotherapy  
[https://www.amjmed.com/article/S0002-9343\(15\)00516-1/fulltext](https://www.amjmed.com/article/S0002-9343(15)00516-1/fulltext)

An Outbreak of Amebiasis Spread by Colonic Irrigation at a Chiropractic Clinic  
<https://www.nejm.org/doi/full/10.1056/NEJM198208053070603>

Ernst E. Colonic irrigation and the theory of autointoxication: a triumph of ignorance over science. *J Clin Gastroenterol.* 1997;24:196-198.

Handley DV, Rieger NA, Rodda DJ. Rectal perforation from colonic irrigation administered by alternative practitioners. *Med J Aust.* 2004;181:575-576.

Abaskharoun R, Depew W, Vanner S. Changes in renal function following administration of oral sodium phosphate or polyethylene glycol for colon cleansing before colonoscopy. *Can J Gastroenterol.* 2007;21:227-231.

Norlela S, Izham C, Khalid BA. Colonic irrigation-induced hyponatremia. *Malays J Pathol.* 2004;26:117-118.

Tan MP, Cheong DM. Life-threatening perineal gangrene from rectal perforation following colonic hydrotherapy: a case report. *Ann Acad Med Singapore.* 1999;28:583-585.

**Fiscal Note:**

None

**Existing ISMS policy related to this issue:**

Board of Trustees adopted this position on provision of services by non-medical personnel: “It is the position of the Society that sick people should receive appropriate care under the direction and supervision of a physician licensed to practice medicine in all its branches. Professional services provided by ancillary health professionals play a vital role in care and are encouraged but should not be provided without the direction of a physician.” (BOT 1977-APR)

The Illinois State Medical Society opposes efforts to allow nurse practitioners, physician assistants, and other non-physician practitioners to order or interpret diagnostic imaging studies independent of a collaborative relationship with a physician licensed in Illinois. (2021 Annual Meeting; BOT 2020-OCT; Last BOT Review 2020)

Only physicians licensed to practice medicine in all its branches are qualified to prescribe or administer eye medication for therapeutic purposes and services. ISMS vigorously opposes any legislative attempt in Illinois to allow non-physicians to prescribe or use medications other than approved topical agents used for diagnosis. (HOD 1987; Last BOT Review 2010)

It is the policy of ISMS to be supportive of limiting excessive costs of the non-physician elements of patient care and to encourage legislative focus on cost-profit reduction of the non-physician elements of National Health Expenditure in like manner as has been done over the past 25 years on physicians, suggesting it be considered before or at least in conjunction with national health insurance consideration. (HOD 1992; Revised 2002; Last BOT Review 2011)