



Principles of Practice

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Preamble:

These Principles are not prescriptive. Individual jurisdictions have their own standards to which a registered chiropractor complies as part of registration requirements. However this document outlines some high level principles which should be considered in the practice of every chiropractor. The CCEA expects that teaching institutions, chiropractic associations, overseas trained and newly graduating chiropractors have a thorough understanding of these principles and their application.

These are not exhaustive. Any dereliction of professional duty and/or responsibility or the abuse of any of the privileges and opportunities afforded by practicing as a chiropractor may give rise to an allegation of professional misconduct or conduct unbecoming a chiropractor. The question of whether any particular course of conduct amounts to this is a matter determined by the relevant local authorities after considering the evidence in each case.

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Obligations to patients:

Respect:

A patient should be treated with respect, dignity and courtesy.

Service:

A patient should be fully aware of the cost of services at the outset. Quality of service should always be of a high standard.

Communication:

A patient has the right to be:

- listened to, and
- given information in an appropriate manner.

Informed Consent:

A patient should be informed at the commencement of service of:

- any foreseeable implications,
- any foreseeable complications, and
- procedures likely to be used.

They should be able to use that knowledge to give consent to treatment.

Privacy and Confidentiality:

A patient's privacy and confidentiality must always be maintained.

Competence:

A patient should expect safe, up-to-date and competent service.

Treatment:

A patient has the right to decide whether or not to undergo treatment.

Obligations to the Public

The public is entitled to receive safe, effective and ethical chiropractic services performed by knowledgeable, skilled, accountable chiropractors. Each chiropractor will utilize an individualized, comprehensive approach for each patient, which recognizes the patient's:

- needs and background, and
- right to choose from a range of options.

The chiropractor shall not take advantage of patients in any way, including:

- physically,
- psychologically,
- emotionally, or
- financially.

Obligations to the Profession

CCEA expects chiropractors to maintain standards of practice and conduct in a professional and ethical manner. Registered chiropractors are obligated to:

- comply with the acts and regulations of their jurisdiction,
- adhere to the guidelines of the relevant regulatory authority, and
- maintain professional competency that will ensure the delivery of safe, quality chiropractic services.

Obligations as Chiropractors

Each registered chiropractor must:

- demonstrate competence,
- strive to update professional knowledge and skills relevant to his or her area of practice, and
- collaborate with other health-professionals and others as appropriate with the goal of enhancing their patient care.

Professional Accountability

As regulated professionals, chiropractors should be able to demonstrate that they serve the patient's best interest. Accountability means that the chiropractor is responsible for his or her decisions and actions. Chiropractors have an obligation to account for and explain their actions. A competent chiropractor:

- is aware of his or her strengths and limits;
- knows the guidelines and rules;
- makes appropriate choices consciously and deliberately; and
- is able to explain why s/he took a particular course of action.

Case Management

Case management is a process designed to coordinate the specific chiropractic services needed by an individual patient to achieve optimal clinical results in an effective manner. The following actions should be taken by a chiropractor as part of adequate case management:

- Take into account the indications and contraindications for care.
- Use patient-focused clinical assessment and interpretation.
- Act consistently with the role of the chiropractor practicing in a direct/primary contact context.
- Perform a logical sequence of actions.
- Base each action on prior information.
- Make clinical decisions from the data obtained.
- Form and record a management plan.
- Provide advice and inform the patient about lifestyle issues that impact on the care delivered.
- Evaluate progress.
- Regularly discuss and gain consent for all these issues with the patient.

Management plans are ongoing and are based upon and modified by the:

- current condition of the patient,
- techniques chosen, and
- patient's response.

X-rays

X-rays should only be taken when they can be clinically justified by an assessment of the risk-benefit ratio involved. Before ordering or taking X-rays, chiropractors should consider the following points:

- X-rays contain harmful ionizing radiation so all radiological investigations of a patient should be appropriate and adequate.
- Children are more susceptible to the effects of ionizing radiation.

Radiographic studies should be selected after considering:

- data obtained from the history, physical and neuro-musculo-skeletal examinations,
- relevance and acceptable levels of clinical usefulness, and
- the risk-benefit ratio.

X-ray results should be recorded in patient files.

Transparency

Transparent practice requires full disclosure, which:

- ensures integrity within the patient-chiropractor relationship, and
- requires clear, open and thorough communication.

It is inappropriate to withhold information that may impact on the patient's ability to become involved as an informed participant.

Confidentiality

Chiropractors are entrusted with personal and often sensitive information about their patients. The chiropractor has a responsibility to respect, secure and protect the privacy of this information subject to any legal requirement to the contrary (eg. mandatory reporting). Even when sharing with those individuals who have the appropriate authority to receive it, the quantity and content of information provided should reflect the principle of a "need to know" basis only.

Professional Boundaries

A chiropractor-patient relationship is an unequal relationship. The chiropractor is responsible for establishing and maintaining professional boundaries with his or her patients. The professional is in a position of power because of the knowledge s/he holds and the patient's need for that knowledge. In order to ensure a trusting relationship the professional must not misuse or abuse the position of power by crossing inappropriate boundaries.

Consent and Informed Consent

Informed consent by the patient promotes freedom of choice. It supports an honest, patient-centred approach that helps to ensure that the patient's best interests are served. Consent is defined as the patient's permission to proceed with an agreed course of action. Informed consent requires that the person making the decision receives all the information that any reasonable person would require in order to make that decision, including alternative options and having the chiropractor respond to any reasonable requests for additional information about the matter. If the patient is unable, by means of age, language or other disability, to give informed consent appropriate steps must be taken to have a guardian or translator appointed for the patient in accordance with their need and current legislation.

Conflict of Interest

A conflict of interest arises when the chiropractor has a relationship or interest that could be seen as improperly influencing the chiropractor's:

- professional judgment, or
- ability to act in the best interests of the patient.

Conflicts may present in different ways and if identified, whether they are real or perceived, need to be addressed.

Keeping of Records

A chiropractor's duty of care requires the maintenance of records associated with the treatment of a patient. Adequate records are essential to enable proper management of a patient by the chiropractor and possibly his or her successors. In addition, the chiropractor might be called upon to produce appropriate patient records during legal or other proceedings.

A chiropractor is responsible for the content of the records related to the chiropractic service. The record must reflect the chiropractor's:

- professional analysis and/or opinion,
- intervention, and
- recommendations.

Use of Titles

The use of any title or designation:

- is an effective method of quickly imparting considerable information about oneself to others,
- immediately allows others to identify the common roles or activities and characteristics about that title, and
- serves as a means of representing yourself to others.

Titles may be attributed to an individual through a variety of mechanisms, including:

- earned through training or education (eg professional credentials),
- by courtesy, and
- as a result of a position held (eg a job title such as case manager).

Titles used by chiropractors should be appropriate for the person in their specific setting.