

## Position statement

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20 June 2017

### Statement on the provision of health information

#### The Chiropractic Board of Australia

The role of the Chiropractic Board of Australia (the Board) is to protect the public consistent with the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory ([the National Law](#)).

In regulating the profession, the Board is responsible for registering practitioners, setting professional standards and investigating concerns about chiropractors.<sup>1</sup>

The Board aims to ensure the public has access to safe and competent services from the profession. It does this through the National Registration and Accreditation Scheme ([the National Scheme](#)) supported by the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra).

The National Scheme has patient safety at its heart, and all health practitioners have a duty to make safe and effective patient care their primary concern.

#### Codes and guidelines

The Board's [Code of conduct for chiropractors](#) (2022) (the Code) and [Guidelines for advertising a regulated health services](#) are published on its [website](#). These documents, and the Board's other policies and guidelines, outline the Board's guiding principles and expectations of practitioners to deliver effective healthcare in an ethical framework.

The Code guides practitioners' professional judgement, and helps the Board to set and maintain expectations of good practice.

Under the provisions of the Code, practitioners need to practice in an evidence-informed way, integrating acceptable evidence with expertise to make clinical decisions together with patient values and preferences.

#### The Board's position on the provision of health information

Chiropractors are often the initial contact point for patients seeking healthcare and are educated and informed about many matters concerning health and healthcare choices. As a result, chiropractors are often asked to provide advice and instruction about a range of health issues.

The most common questions from patients for advice relate to exercise and spinal health, but many patients also ask questions about general health and lifestyle promotion. Chiropractors are obliged to provide balanced, non-biased information based on acceptable evidence to patients, so as to help them make informed health decisions.

The [Code](#) requires practitioners to practice in an evidence-based and patient-centred manner to ensure they provide the best healthcare for their patients. Evidence-based practice involves a practitioner considering available acceptable evidence, including research and other sources of information, in addition to their clinical experience and the patient's values during their clinical decision-making process.

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<sup>1</sup> Except in NSW, which has a co-regulatory system. In NSW, complaints about chiropractors are handled by the [Chiropractic Council of NSW](#).

Healthcare decisions made in the context of evidence-based practice must be adequately underpinned by proper information consent. As set out in Section 4.2 of the Code, the informed consent process includes providing information on material risks and expected outcomes.

Whilst lower forms of acceptable evidence may be adequate to support a well-constructed and controlled trial of clinical care for some conditions, clinical experience alone is rarely adequate to support clinical decision-making that is contrary to current acceptable evidence and/or best-practice approaches. Patient consent does not end a practitioner's responsibilities to provide ethical and professional care consistent with the standards and expectations of the Board.

Section 6.3 of the Code addresses the area of public health, and clearly states that, *'Practitioners have a responsibility to promote the health and the community through infection and disease prevention and control, education and, where relevant, screening.'*

Current acceptable evidence indicates that preventative measures such as vaccination are a cost effective and clinically effective public health procedure for certain viral and microbial diseases.

Patients have the right to make their own health decisions, however they should be adequately informed about the benefits and risks to both the individual and the broader community associated with their health decisions.

Chiropractors may often be asked to provide information not directly relevant to their competency or the scope of their practice; in such cases patients should be referred to a health professional with sufficient expertise in that field to address their questions or concerns.

Advice about vaccination is not typically within the usual area of practice or competency for a chiropractor. Chiropractors should not display, promote or provide materials, information or advice that is anti-vaccination in nature and/or should not make public comment discouraging vaccination.

In maintaining good practice, practitioners should consider the balance of benefit and harm in all clinical decisions. All care options or recommendations should be based on best available acceptable evidence.

### **If anyone has a concern about a chiropractor**

As the national regulation and registration body governing the chiropractic profession, the Board would be very concerned about any practitioner who misrepresents or misleads members of the public on any health issue.

Complaints or concerns about registered chiropractors can be brought to the attention of the Board through Ahpra. Details about the management of complaints or concerns ('notifications' under the National Law) or if anyone wants to raise a concern or make a complaint about the health, conduct or performance of a chiropractor they can do so by going to the [Ahpra website](#), see the [Concerns about practitioners](#) section.

All complaints or concerns received will be assessed by the Board and be dealt with according to the disciplinary processes and provisions defined in the National Law. Concerns about a practitioners' advertising can also be drawn to the attention of the Board and Ahpra this way.

#### *For more information*

- Visit [www.chiropracticboard.gov.au](http://www.chiropracticboard.gov.au) under *Contact us* to lodge an online enquiry form
- For registration enquiries: 1300 419 495 (within Australia) +61 3 8708 9001 (overseas callers)
- For media enquiries: (03) 8708 9200