

# Code of Conduct

The Code of Conduct is prescribed by the Public Health (General) Regulation 2002.

## 1 Definitions

In this code of conduct: **health practitioner**, **health registration Act** and **health service** have the same meanings as in the Health Care Complaints Act 1993.

**Note.** The *Health Care Complaints Act 1993* defines those terms as follows:

**health practitioner** means a natural person who provides a health service (whether or not the person is registered under a health registration Act).

**health registration Act** means any of the following Acts:

<i>Chiropractors Act 2001</i>	<i>Dental Technicians Registration Act 1975</i>	<i>Dental Practice Act 2001</i>
<i>Medical Practice Act 1992</i>	<i>Nurses and Midwives Act 1991</i>	<i>Optical Dispensers Act 1963</i>
<i>Optometrists Act 2002</i>	<i>Osteopaths Act 2001</i>	<i>Pharmacy Practice Act 2006</i>
<i>Physiotherapists Act 2001</i>	<i>Podiatrists Act 2003</i>	<i>Psychologists Act 2001</i>

**health service** includes the following services, whether provided as public or private services: (a) medical, hospital and nursing services, (b) dental services, (c) mental health services, (d) pharmaceutical services, (e) ambulance services, (f) community health services, (g) health education services, (h) welfare services necessary to implement any services referred to in paragraphs (a)–(g), (i) services provided by podiatrists, chiropractors, osteopaths, optometrists, physiotherapists, psychologists and optical dispensers, (j) services provided by dietitians, masseurs, naturopaths, acupuncturists, occupational therapists, speech therapists, audiologists, audiometrists and radiographers, (k) services provided in other alternative health care fields, (k1) forensic pathology services, (l) a service prescribed by the regulations as a health service for the purposes of this Act.

## 2 Application of code of conduct

This code of conduct applies to the provision of health services by:

- health practitioners who are not required to be registered under a health registration Act (including de-registered health practitioners), and
- health practitioners who are registered under a health registration Act who provide health services that are unrelated to their registration.

**Note.** Health practitioners may be subject to other requirements relating to the provision of health services to which this Code applies, including, for example, requirements imposed by Part 2A of the Act and the regulations under the Act relating to skin penetration procedures.

## 3 Health practitioners to provide services in safe and ethical manner

- A health practitioner must provide health services in a safe and ethical manner.
- Without limiting subclause (1), health practitioners must comply with the following principles:
  - a health practitioner must maintain the necessary competence in his or her field of practice,
  - a health practitioner must not provide health care of a type that is outside his or her experience or training,
  - a health practitioner must prescribe only treatments or appliances that serve the needs of the client,
  - a health practitioner must recognise the limitations of the treatment he or she can provide and refer clients to other competent health practitioners in appropriate circumstances,
  - a health practitioner must recommend to his or her clients that additional opinions and services be sought, where appropriate,
  - a health practitioner must assist his or her clients to find other appropriate health care professionals, if required and practicable,
  - a health practitioner must encourage his or her clients to inform their treating medical practitioner (if any) of the treatments they are receiving,
  - a health practitioner must have a sound understanding of any adverse interactions between the therapies and treatments he or she provides or prescribes and any other medications or treatments, whether prescribed or not, that the health practitioner is aware the client is taking or receiving,
  - a health practitioner must ensure that appropriate first aid is available to deal with any misadventure during a client consultation,
  - a health practitioner must obtain appropriate emergency assistance (for example, from the Ambulance Service) in the event of any serious misadventure during a client consultation.

## 4 Health practitioners diagnosed with infectious medical condition

- A health practitioner who has been diagnosed with a medical condition that can be passed on to clients must ensure that he or she practises in a manner that does not put clients at risk.
- Without limiting subclause (1), a health practitioner who has been diagnosed with a medical condition that can be passed on to clients should take and follow advice from an appropriate medical practitioner on the steps to be taken to modify his or her practice to avoid the possibility of transmitting that condition to clients.

## 5 Health practitioners not to make claims to cure certain serious illnesses

- A health practitioner must not hold himself or herself out as qualified, able or willing to cure cancer and other terminal illnesses.
- A health practitioner may make a claim as to his or her ability or willingness to treat or alleviate the symptoms of those illnesses if that claim can be substantiated.

## 6 Health practitioners to adopt standard precautions for infection control

- A health practitioner must adopt standard precautions for the control of infection in his or her practice.
- Without limiting subclause (1), a health practitioner who carries out a skin penetration procedure within the meaning of section 51 (3) of the Act must comply with the relevant regulations under the Act in relation to the carrying out of the procedure.

## 7 Appropriate conduct in relation to treatment advice

- A health practitioner must not attempt to dissuade clients from seeking or continuing with treatment by a registered medical practitioner.
- A health practitioner must accept the right of his or her clients to make informed choices in relation to their health care.
- A health practitioner should communicate and co-operate with colleagues and other health care practitioners and agencies in the best interests of their clients.
- A health practitioner who has serious concerns about the treatment provided to any of his or her clients by another health practitioner must refer the matter to the Health Care Complaints Commission.

## 8 Not to practise under influence of alcohol or drugs

- Must not practise under the influence of alcohol or unlawful drugs.
- A health practitioner who is taking prescribed medication must obtain advice from the prescribing health practitioner on the impact of the medication on his /her ability to practice and must refrain from treating clients in circumstances where his/ her ability is or may be impaired.

## 9 Health practitioners not to practise with certain physical or mental conditions

A health practitioner must not practice while suffering from a physical or mental impairment, disability, condition or disorder (including an addiction to alcohol or a drug, whether or not prescribed) that detrimentally affects, or is likely to detrimentally affect, his or her ability to practice or that places clients at risk of harm.

## 10 Health practitioners not to financially exploit clients

- A health practitioner must not accept financial inducements or gifts for referring clients to other health practitioners or to the suppliers of medications or therapeutic goods or devices.
- A health practitioner must not offer financial inducements or gifts in return for client referrals from other health practitioners.
- A health practitioner must not provide services and treatments to clients unless they are designed to maintain or improve the clients' health or wellbeing.

## 11 Health practitioners required to have clinical basis for treatments

A health practitioner must not diagnose or treat an illness or condition without an adequate clinical basis.

## 12 Health practitioners not to misinform their clients

- A health practitioner must not engage in any form of misinformation or misrepresentation in relation to the products or services he or she provides or as to his or her qualifications, training or professional affiliations.
- A health practitioner must provide truthful information as to his or her qualifications, training or professional affiliations if asked by a client.
- A health practitioner must not make claims, either directly or in advertising or promotional material, about the efficacy of treatment or services provided if those claims cannot be substantiated.

## 13 Health practitioners not to engage in sexual or improper personal relationship with client

- A health practitioner must not engage in a sexual or other close personal relationship with a client.
- Before engaging in a sexual or other close personal relationship with a former client, a health practitioner must ensure that a suitable period of time has elapsed since the conclusion of their therapeutic relationship.

## 14 Health practitioners to comply with relevant privacy laws

A health practitioner must comply with the relevant legislation of the State or the Commonwealth relating to his or her clients' personal information.

## 15 Health practitioners to keep appropriate records

A health practitioner must maintain accurate, legible and contemporaneous clinical records for each client consultation.

## 16 Health practitioners to keep appropriate insurance

A health practitioner should ensure that appropriate indemnity insurance arrangements are in place in relation to his or her practice.

## 17 Certain health practitioners to display code and other information

- A health practitioner must display a copy of each of the following documents at all premises where the health practitioner carries on his or her practice:
  - this code of conduct,
  - a document that gives information about the way in which clients may make a complaint to the Health Care Complaints Commission, being a document in a form approved by the Director-General of the Department of Health.
- Copies of those documents must be displayed in a position and manner that makes them easily visible to clients entering the relevant premises.
- This clause does not apply to any of the following premises:
  - the premises of any body within the public health system (as defined in section 6 of the *Health Services Act 1997*),
  - private hospitals or day procedure centres (as defined in the *Private Hospitals and Day Procedure Centres Act 1988*),
  - premises of the Ambulance Service of NSW (as defined in the *Health Services Act 1997*),
  - premises of approved providers (within the meaning of the *Aged Care Act 1997* of the Commonwealth).

## Concerned about your health care?

The Code of Conduct for unregistered health practitioners sets out what you can expect from your provider. If you are concerned about the health service that was provided to you or your next of kin, talk to the practitioner immediately. In most cases the health service provider will try to resolve them. If you are not satisfied with the provider's response, contact the Inquiry Service of the Health Care Complaints Commission for a confidential discussion on

**(02) 9219 7444 or toll free on 1800 043 159.**

If your complaint is about sexual or physical assault or relates to the immediate health or safety of a person, you should contact the Commission immediately.

### What is the Health Care Complaints Commission?

The Health Care Complaints Commission is an independent body dealing with complaints about health services to protect the public health and safety.

### Service in other languages

The Commission uses interpreting services to assist people whose first language is not English. If you need an interpreter, please contact the Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS National) on 131 450 and ask to be connected to the Health Care Complaints Commission on 1800 043 159 (9.00 am to 5.00 pm Monday to Friday)

### More information

For more information about the Health Care Complaints Commission, visit [www.hccc.nsw.gov.au](http://www.hccc.nsw.gov.au).

### Contact the Health Care Complaints Commission

Office address: Level 13, 323 Castlereagh Street, SYDNEY NSW 2000,  
9.00 am to 5.00 pm Monday to Friday  
Post address: Locked Mail Bag 18, STRAWBERRY HILLS NSW 2012  
Telephone: (02) 92197444 or toll free in NSW 1800 043 159  
Fax: (02) 9281 4585  
E-mail: [hccc@hccc.nsw.gov.au](mailto:hccc@hccc.nsw.gov.au)  
People using telephone typewriters please call (02) 9219 7555