

Te Poari Kaikorohiti o Aotearoa | the Chiropractic Board: Draft Code of Ethics

Preamble

1. The role of Te Poari Kaikorohiti o Aotearoa | the Chiropractic Board (the Board) is to protect public health and safety and to oversee professional and ethical standards in the chiropractic profession. The Board's obligation is to ensure chiropractors meet and maintain professional standards of education, conduct, performance, and delivery of high-quality healthcare to the public.
2. The Board is required by the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance (HPCA) Act 2003 to set standards of clinical competence, cultural competence and ethical conduct for chiropractors.¹ The Board's Code of Ethics (Code) sets out the fundamental principles guiding chiropractors in their professional responsibilities. The Code's purpose is to:
 - ensure chiropractors act with integrity, prioritise patient well-being and uphold public trust in the profession. Respect, trust, and professionalism are the foundation of the practitioner-patient relationship, ensuring that all interactions are ethical, transparent, and patient-centred.
 - reinforce the expectation that chiropractors provide safe, competent, and ethical care. It supports professional accountability, ensuring the consistent application of high standards in practice, and safeguards both the public and the credibility of the profession in Aotearoa New Zealand.
 - emphasise cultural safety and the need for respectful, responsive practice with Māori. An awareness that cultural safety encompasses a critical consciousness and a deep understanding is crucial to the commitment to diversity and inclusion. This ensures chiropractic care is delivered in a way that respects the values and needs of all communities.
3. The Board acknowledges Te Tiriti of Waitangi as the foundation for relationships in Aotearoa New Zealand, affirming the rights of iwi, hapū, and Māori in shaping the nation. It recognises that cultural safety requires healthcare professionals and organisations to engage in ongoing self-reflection, maintain self-awareness, and hold themselves accountable for providing culturally safe care, as defined by the patient and their communities.
4. All chiropractors are required to comply with the Code. The Board will hold chiropractors to account if their conduct falls short of professional and ethical standards. The Code will be used by the public, the Board, and other agencies to assess the expected professional behaviour of chiropractors.²

¹ HPCA Act, s 118(i).

² Including the Health and Disability Commissioner and the Health Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal.

How to read the Code of Ethics Standards

The Code of Ethics (the Code) is a set of values which underpin core principles of professional practice. The principles are supported by standards which enable chiropractors to understand how the values and principles apply to their practice.

Values:

These values support the principles of the Board's Code of Ethics:

- Care
- Integrity and Honesty
- Trust and Respect
- Privacy and Confidentiality
- Relationships and Communication
- Partnerships and Collaboration
- Professionalism and Obligations

Code of Ethics Principles

Principle 1: Always act in your patients' best interests, ensuring their care is your primary concern. Treat them with dignity, kindness, and consideration.

Principle 2: Practise with integrity, honesty, and transparency, while recognising and respecting the vulnerability and autonomy of patients.

Principle 3: Treat everyone with respect, fairness, and without discrimination or bias.

Principle 4: Respect patient privacy and confidentiality.

Principle 5: Recognise, respect, and uphold the dignity and uniqueness of every individual in all professional interactions, fostering respectful, trusting relationships.

Principle 6: Work respectfully with others.

Principle 7: Uphold your professionalism and ethical responsibilities by respecting patient autonomy and cultural safety, thereby protecting patient well-being.

Compliance

The Code of Ethics is a set of values and principles. It is not an exhaustive list of rules for every situation you may encounter. Chiropractors are expected to adhere to the ethical values and principles, demonstrate insight and use their professional judgement in all areas of their practice. If you encounter a difficult situation, you should seek guidance from a professional peer. You must be able to justify your behaviour if it is called into question. The Board will hold chiropractors to account for breaches of professional standards.

Code of Ethics Standards

Care

Provide safe, competent, and respectful care that prioritises patient well-being. Care includes listening to patients, ensuring they understand their care options, and providing services in a way that acknowledges their individual needs and cultural background.

Principle 1: Always act in your patients' best interests, ensuring their care is your primary concern. Treat them with dignity, kindness, and consideration.

Standards:

1. You have a duty to ensure the care of your patients is your primary concern.
2. You are expected to provide care that is evidence-informed and within your scope of practice.
3. Respect the mana and autonomy of your patients by being present, asking, listening and appreciating their views about their health, and responding to their concerns and preferences where practicable.
4. Work in partnership with the whānau/family and support network of your patient, where appropriate, and be respectful of their role in the care of your patient.
5. Take a holistic approach to care by considering your patients' overall health as well as their psychological wellbeing and social circumstances.
6. Act in the best interests of your patient by responding promptly, professionally and appropriately to their needs.

Honesty and Integrity

Honesty and integrity work together. Honesty is demonstrated by accurately explaining a patient's condition and care options, and integrity is shown by recommending care based on your patients' needs, not personal gain, and showing transparency by outlining the risks, benefits, and costs of care. Recommended treatments must be based on patients' clinical and treatment needs and not personal gain.

Principle 2: Practise with honesty, integrity, and transparency, while recognising and respecting the vulnerability and autonomy of patients.

Standards:

1. Respect your patients right to reach decisions with you about their care.
2. Be truthful and transparent in all professional interactions.
3. Do not exaggerate or misrepresent your patient's condition to encourage unnecessary care.
4. Clearly explain the risks, benefits, costs and expected outcomes of care.
5. Recognise the power imbalance in the patient-practitioner relationship and avoid any form of pressure, manipulation, or coercion (perceived or otherwise).
6. Ensure financial interests do not influence clinical decisions.

7. Be honest when making claims or undertaking treatment for third party payers and comply with the responsibilities they expect of you (e.g. ACC, insurers).

Trust and Respect

Building and maintaining trust is essential to safe, ethical and effective practice. Patients need to feel confident that you will act in their best interests and provide competent care while prioritising the patients' safety and wellbeing.

Respect is fundamental to all professional relationships, including those with patients, whānau, colleagues, and the wider healthcare community. Treating others with respect means recognising their cultural context, dignity, and individuality.

Principle 3: Treat everyone with respect and fairness without discrimination or bias.

Standards:

1. Treat everyone with respect, fairness and without discrimination (for example, but not limited to, race, gender, age, religion, ethnicity, disability, sexual orientation, political affiliation, cultural background, mental health, economic, social or health status).
2. Ensure culturally safe care by respecting cultural differences and diverse health beliefs while providing care.
3. Provide your patient with clear, accurate information about the nature, purpose, benefits, and limitations of chiropractic care. Support informed decision-making by respecting their right to refuse care, seek another opinion, or choose a management plan that reflects their own values, needs, and preferences—free from coercion.
4. Demonstrate respect by listening, communicating openly, and practising in a way that values the perspectives and experiences of your patients.
5. Maintain appropriate professional boundaries in relationships with patients, colleagues, and students.³
6. Refrain from making unfounded negative remarks about colleagues or other healthcare professionals or procedures and use professionalism to address concerns.

Privacy and Confidentiality

Respect and protect patients' privacy by handling personal and health information with care, ensuring it is collected, stored, and shared in accordance with legal and ethical obligations. Only disclose patient information when required by law or with the patient's informed consent.

Principle 4: Respect patient privacy and confidentiality

Standards:

1. Maintain confidentiality of patient information, even when they are no longer under your care.
2. Do not disclose identifiable personal or health information without the patient's consent, unless required or permitted by law.
3. Store, handle, and share patient records securely to ensure privacy is always protected.

³ Also see the Professional Boundaries Standards.

4. Obtain written consent before disclosing patient information and keep a copy of all disclosures in the patient's file.⁴
5. Provide the appropriate space for private consultations and treatment when requested or necessary.
6. Take steps where practicable to ensure patient conversations remain private and are not overheard by others.

Relationships and Communication

As a chiropractor, you are expected to develop and maintain professional and effective relationships with patients, their families/whānau, and colleagues. These relationships are grounded in respect, trust, and professionalism, and should be fair, transparent, and focused on the needs of the patient. Effective communication is essential to building these relationships and delivering high-quality care.

Informed consent is a fundamental aspect of ethical practice. Obtaining informed consent is an ongoing process of communication between you and your patient. It involves providing clear, accurate, and relevant information about the nature, purpose, benefits and risks of treatment, and allowing the patient to make an informed decision about their care without coercion.

Culturally safe care requires ongoing self-reflection, self-awareness, and accountability. It involves providing care that is respectful, responsive, and defined by the patient and their communities.

Principle 5: Recognise, respect, and uphold the dignity and uniqueness of every individual in all professional interactions, fostering respectful, trusting relationships.

Standards:

1. The patient-practitioner relationship plays a critical role in treatment success. You set the boundaries for your practice ensuring your patients feel informed, acknowledged, respected, valued and safe.
2. Where practicable, work in partnership with Māori and whānau to improve health outcomes and promote health equity
3. Ensure your patients understand their options and are provided with the opportunity to ask questions before proceeding with any treatment.
4. Treatment must only be provided if a patient has given their informed consent. Consent should be recorded in the patient's clinical records.⁵
5. Maintain appropriate boundaries in your interactions with patients, colleagues and the public.
6. Maintain the integrity of the professional relationship. Do not exploit patients physically, sexually, emotionally, or financially. If a pre-existing relationship could affect your

⁴ In limited circumstances, consent to disclosure may not be required. You should be familiar with your obligations under the Privacy Act 2020 and the Health Information Privacy Code 2020 and seek advice if you are unsure.

⁵ See the commentary below about informed consent in this standard

professional judgement or the patient's care, refer the patient to another health practitioner.

Commentary: Consent

For most procedures verbal consent is usually sufficient, however this should be documented in patient records. Getting patients to sign a non-specific consent to any future proposed treatment is not acceptable. Consent must be obtained for every new treatment plan, or when the patient's circumstances change.

Consent should be considered an ongoing conversation between you and your patient and should be obtained prior to each interaction. You should be alert to the possibility that a patient may wish to withdraw consent to ongoing or future treatment, and this must be respected.

In emergency situations where treatment is necessary to save a patient's life, or to prevent harm to the patient, and the patient's wishes are not known, the professional is expected to act in the patient's best interests (which may include, for example, providing resuscitation).

Professional Collaboration

Professional collaboration strengthens the chiropractic profession and enhances outcomes for patients. As a chiropractor, you are encouraged to engage respectfully and constructively with colleagues, professional bodies, health organisations, and other healthcare providers. By working together, you contribute to integrated, safe, and culturally responsive care.

Principle 6: Work respectfully with others

Standards:

1. Treat colleagues with respect and work collaboratively, recognising their right to hold different opinions. You must maintain respectful behaviour towards and about colleagues and other health professionals.
2. Communicate clearly, effectively, respectfully, and promptly with other health professionals involved in the patient's care, and when referring or transferring care to another health professional or service provider.
3. Recognise the value of Māori health models and work with cultural health providers where appropriate and practicable/or required.
4. Contribute to a positive professional environment by treating colleagues with fairness and respect.

Professionalism and Obligations

Professionalism is demonstrated through ongoing commitment to ethical practice, cultural safety, and continuous learning. As a chiropractor, you are expected to maintain competence, stay up to date with best practices, and uphold the standards set by the Board.

You are expected to comply with all relevant laws and regulations in Aotearoa New Zealand including (but not limited to) the Children's Act 2014, the Health and Disability Commissioner Act 1994, the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights, the Privacy Act 2020, and the Human Rights Act 1993.

Adherence to standards set by the Board is essential to maintaining public trust and delivering safe, high-quality care.

Principle 7: Uphold professionalism and ethical responsibilities, including by respecting patient autonomy, and cultural safety, thereby protecting patient well-being

Standards:

1. Act with professionalism and maintain appropriate professional boundaries in your interactions with patients.
2. When a patient has compromised decision-making capacity or is unable to provide informed consent, you must act in accordance with the [Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights 1996, \(Right 7\)](#).
3. Uphold your professional reputation and avoid any actions that could bring the profession into disrepute.
4. All communications with colleagues, including other healthcare professionals, must be conducted with professionalism and respect.
5. Engage in ongoing professional development to ensure skills remain current and evidence informed.
6. Accept personal accountability for clinical reasoning and patient management and be prepared to justify your actions if required.
7. You must be alert to the needs of vulnerable groups, including children, the elderly, and individuals with disabilities, and take appropriate action if there are concerns about abuse or neglect.
8. You must report concerns that may impact patient safety or well-being. The Board should be notified of concerns about another chiropractor.

How to make a complaint

You can make a complaint to the Board if you or anyone else has a concern regarding adherence to the Board's Professional Boundaries Standards, or any other Board standards.

If you are a patient or a member of the public and wish to make a formal complaint, please refer to the [raising a concern](#) page on the Board's website for more information.

If you are a health practitioner, and wish make a formal complaint or you have had a formal complaint raised about your practice, please refer to the [raising a concern](#) page on the Board's website for more information.

The Board is required to refer complaints affecting patients to the Health and Disability Commissioner.

Legal and policy setting:

These standards are set by the Board under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003. Other relevant legislation includes (but is not limited to):

- Accident Compensation Act 2001
- Consumer Guarantees Act 1993 and the Fair-Trading Act 1986
- Health and Disability Commissioner Act 1994 (HDCA) and the Health and Disability Commissioner (Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights) Regulations 1996
- Privacy Act 2020 and Health Information Privacy Code 2020;
- Protected Disclosures (Protection of Whistleblowers) Act 2022.
- Children's Act 2014 (formerly the Vulnerable Children Act 2014)

Glossary and definitions

Term	Definition
Autonomy	The right of individuals to make informed decisions about their own health and care. Respecting autonomy means ensuring that patients are given accurate information, are free from coercion, and are supported to choose the care pathway that best reflects their values and preferences.
Confidentiality	The ethical and legal duty to protect personal and health information shared by patients
Clinical Reasoning and/or Management Plan	The decision-making process to assess, diagnose, and determine an appropriate plan of care. A management plan includes treatment options, goals, timeframes, and review strategies, developed in partnership with the patient.
Culture	A set of shared values, beliefs, customs, behaviours, and traditions that shape the way individuals and groups understand the world and interact with others. Culture includes, but is not limited to, ethnicity, language, religion, gender, sexual orientation, disability, and socioeconomic status.
Cultural Safety	An approach to health care that recognises the impact of a practitioner's own culture on service delivery, requiring ongoing self-reflection and a commitment to equity.
Evidence-Based Practice	The integration of the best available research evidence with clinical expertise and the patient's preferences, values, and circumstances to inform care decisions
Evidence-Informed Practice	A broader approach than evidence-based practice, recognising that research may be limited or evolving. It incorporates current evidence, clinical experience, and patient input.
Hapū	A subtribe or kinship group descended from a common ancestor. It is an important political and social unit in Māori society, often responsible for specific land, resources, and decision-making.
Informed Consent	A process of shared communication in which a patient is given sufficient, relevant, and understandable information to make voluntary decisions about their care.

Iwi	A large tribal group composed of multiple hapū, connected by a common ancestry. Iwi is central to Māori identity and governance and can act as representatives for their people in political matters.
Health Practitioners Competence Assurance (HPCA) Act 2003	The Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 is the primary legislation governing registered health practitioners in Aotearoa New Zealand. It aims to protect public health and safety by ensuring health practitioners are competent and fit to practise.
Professional Boundaries	Limitations that protect the space between a practitioner’s professional power and a patient’s vulnerability: ensuring the practitioner-patient relationship remains ethical, safe.
Scope of Practice	The range of clinical procedures, actions, and responsibilities that a chiropractor is authorised to perform, subject to any conditions. The chiropractic scope of practice is defined by the Board, taking into account professional qualifications, training, and competence requirements.
Whānau	More than just the immediate family, <i>whānau</i> refers to a wider network of relationships that may include extended family, close friends, and others connected by shared whakapapa, experience, or responsibility.