



NEW ZEALAND  
**CHIROPRACTIC BOARD**  
TE POARI KAIKOROHITI O AOTEAROA

# POLICY AND GUIDELINES:

CHIROPRACTIC BOARD TELEHEALTH POLICY

March 2020

## Associated Policy Documents

- Competency-Based Professional Standards for Chiropractors
- Standards of Cultural Competence Policy
- Code of Ethics

## Revision Schedule

Version	Date Approved	Next Review
One	March 2020	March 2023

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

The Board would like to thank the Physiotherapy Board of New Zealand for sharing their Telehealth Standards.

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## 1. INTRODUCTION

Chiropractic Care and management is multi-layered. Within the chiropractic scope of practice and in addition to manual care, education and advice, chiropractors recommend and monitor therapeutic and rehabilitative exercises.

Chiropractors monitor patient progress and provide self-management care plans. The use of information and communications technology could become an integral part of chiropractic practice. Telehealth:

- enables patients in isolated locations to receive care:
- allows for comprehensive delivery of services after-hours:
- allows for efficient use of health resources.

Telehealth is particularly useful when it is incorporated into an existing system for providing patient care. In using telehealth, patients can ask questions and chiropractors can enquire about their patient's overall health and wellbeing. This will assist chiropractors in applying the entirety of the biopsychosocial paradigm to chiropractic care, not just a hands-on approach. Telehealth services provide an integrated platform for patients to access health information, advice and support from their chiropractor. Importantly, it may minimise disruption to patient's progress if they are physically unable to access chiropractic care. This is increasingly important for patients with chronic conditions that may otherwise deteriorate without proper care and management.

In using telehealth, chiropractors should be aware of its limitations and ensure they do not provide a service which puts patient safety at risk. In particular, be aware of the inherent risks in providing treatment when a physical examination of the patient is not possible. For the purpose of this standard 'treating' and 'treatment' covers all aspects of the practice of chiropractic including assessing, diagnosing, reporting, giving advice, signing certificates, and recommending exercise programmes.

If chiropractors provide care to New Zealand-based patients from overseas via telehealth, the New Zealand Chiropractic Board (the Board) holds the view they are practising chiropractic within New Zealand and should, therefore, be registered with the Board<sup>1</sup>. When utilising telehealth, chiropractors are subject to the same requirements as chiropractors registered and practising in New Zealand. These include the Board's competence, conduct and health procedures and the complaints resolution processes of the office of the Health and Disability Commissioner. The Board will notify the appropriate regulatory authorities in other countries if concerns are raised about a particular chiropractor's practice.

The New Zealand Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights establishes the rights of patients and places corresponding obligations on chiropractors with respect to telehealth, as they do with all other forms of health care. This includes but is not limited to informing patients about the provision of telehealth services and seeking the patient's informed consent before the telehealth service is provided.

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<sup>1</sup> An exception to this rule is when a chiropractor located overseas is asked by a New Zealand registered chiropractor to provide an opinion in relation to a patient under the care and/or clinical responsibility of that New Zealand registered chiropractor.

## 2. DEFINITIONS

The Board has defined the following terms as:

**In-person:** Where the chiropractor and patient are physically present in the same consultation room.

**Telehealth:** The use of any form of technology including, but not limited to, video conferencing, internet and telephone, as an alternative to in-person interaction, to deliver health services to a patient and transmit health information regarding that patient between two or more locations at least one of which is within New Zealand.

**Video consultation:** Where the chiropractor and patient use information and video conferencing technologies to communicate with each other and visual and audio information are exchanged in real time, but the chiropractor and patient are not physically present in the same consultation room. A video consultation can be conducted between a chiropractor and patient in the presence of another health practitioner, or it can be conducted with no health practitioner support at the patient's end.

## 3. TELEHEALTH SCOPE OF PRACTICE

This standard applies to chiropractors registered in New Zealand and practising telehealth in New Zealand and/or overseas, and chiropractors who are overseas and provide health services through telehealth to patients in New Zealand. In both these instances, the chiropractors must be registered and hold a current Annual Practising Certificate (APC).

## 4. PROVIDING CARE

1. Any device, software or service used for telehealth must be secure, only allowing the intended recipients to receive and record, and be fit for use. It must preserve the quality of the information or image being transmitted.

The Board expects the treatment provided to a patient in another location meets the same required standards as care provided in an in-person consultation.

This includes standards relating to:

- patient selection, identification, cultural competence, assessment, diagnosis, informed consent, maintaining the patient's privacy and confidentiality, updating the patient's clinical records and communicating with the patient's relevant primary care provider in a timely manner (unless the patient expressly states that the details of the telehealth consultation are not to be shared with their primary care provider), and follow-up.
  - If, because of the limits of technology, the same standard of service cannot be provided as an in-person consultation then the patient must be advised of this limitation.
2. It is particularly important that consideration is given to whether a physical examination would add critical information before providing treatment to a patient or before referring the patient to another health practitioner for services such as diagnostic imaging. If a

physical examination is likely to add critical information, then it should not proceed until a physical examination can be arranged. In some circumstances, it may be reasonable to ask another health practitioner in the patient's locality to conduct the physical examination. In those instances, it is important that the patient's informed consent be obtained and communicated clearly for that arrangement, and the referring chiropractor is available to answer any queries.

3. The patient consent must be obtained prior to commencing any form of telehealth.
4. The telehealth method used for consultation must be noted.
5. When working with or receiving reports from telehealth providers, chiropractors should ensure that the above standards are followed and must notify that telehealth provider, their management and other appropriate reporting channels if there are concerns about the quality of care being provided.

## 5. PROVIDING CARE TO A PATIENT LOCATED OUTSIDE NEW ZEALAND

Chiropractors providing care from New Zealand to patients in another country:

- remain subject to New Zealand law;
- may be subject to other legal obligations, requirements or liabilities in the location where the patient is located;
- may also be subject to the jurisdiction of authorities in the patient's home country;
- may be liable if the patients are assisted to contravene that country's laws or regulations, for example, any importation and possession requirements; and
- legal advice should be sought in that country, if necessary.

## 6. INSURERS AND THIRD-PARTY PAYERS

Chiropractors must understand and abide by the policies or recommendations of insurers or third-party payers regarding telehealth. If the insurers or third-party payer policy is unclear, they should be contacted before any assessment and treatment are undertaken.

## 7. RELATED RESOURCES

These guidelines need to be read in conjunction with the Board's:

- [Competency-Based Professional Standards for Chiropractors](#);
- [Standards of Cultural Competence Policy](#);
- [Code of Ethics](#).

Please also refer to:

- [The Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights](#);
- [Royal Australasian College of Physicians' Telehealth Guidelines and practical tips](#);
- [NZ Telehealth Resource Centre](#).