



NEW CAA QUALITY CARE STATEMENT

There have been a number of important policy initiatives by the Chiropractors' Association of Australia (CAA National) over the past few months.

A Position Statement on *Patient Care through Clinical and Professional Chiropractic Education* was endorsed by the CAA in June 2016. This firmly established CAA National's support for the Australian healthcare and education systems as well as the Australian regulatory environment to ensure the Australian public can continue to have confidence in the chiropractic profession.

Members should be well aware by now that the Australian Health Ministers Conference met in Canberra in early October to discuss a range of health issues including alleged unsafe practices by chiropractors. The Health Ministers communicate released after their meeting noted in part:

Health Ministers agreed to ask for information from the Chiropractors Board of Australia (CBA) and the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) on evidence of any treatments provided by chiropractors that are not appropriately within the chiropractic scope of practice and may be harmful to patients. The agencies were asked to advise on potential regulatory responses.

Australian Health Ministers have flagged a regulatory outcome in response to clear concerns about the treatment of infants and children, as well as ongoing concerns about the behaviour of some

chiropractors when visiting health facilities and, of course, advertising. The Board of CAA National recognises and accepts that chiropractors must be able to demonstrate to regulators and the public that they understand and have acted on these concerns to address a perception, which is being aggressively pushed in some quarters, that there are unsafe practices going on within our profession.

This issue cannot be brushed off as just another example of the antagonism we face from our critics. There is an urgent need to be proactive otherwise Health Ministers may seek to impose restrictions on our scope of practice. If the chiropractic profession does not act to address these concerns there is a very high likelihood that regulatory changes will be imposed on us that are more drastic and possibly threaten the viability of the profession. Whether we agree with them or not, Health Ministers have ongoing concerns about chiropractic and the treatment of infants and children, visiting health facilities and advertising. We must show we understand and have acted on these concerns to ensure that patients continue to receive safe, quality health care and provide reassurance to stakeholders that chiropractors, as one of the 14 registered health professions, are part of the health care team and are willing to work in this capacity.

In response the Board of CAA National

endorsed a new *Quality Care Statement* at its most recent meeting in November. This complements our earlier *Position Statement on Patient Care through Clinical and Professional Chiropractic Education* and sets out our expectation of members with respect to the following:

1. support a fully robust and transparent regulatory framework for the profession;
2. best practice care of infants and children, including supporting the importance of immunisation as a health care initiative;
3. the highest of standards when advertising their services; and
4. professional obligations when visiting health facilities and credentialling

Throughout the process of developing this statement CAA National has been acutely aware of the need to involve state and territory Branches. This was to ensure that the final statement was broadly supported, a crucial requirement if we are to demonstrate to regulators that the profession has acted appropriately in responding to their concerns. Consequently, all Branch Presidents met in person to discuss this issue at the National Conference in Cairns in October.

This meeting was addressed by Susan Redden Makatoa, Group Managing Director (Corporate) at Ogilvy Public Relations. Ogilvy PR has been retained by CAA National to provide advice on Government Relations and Public Affairs. All Presidents were able to listen to a short presentation by Susan and participate in a robust discussion over the course

of an hour and a half. Subsequently, all were involved in the development of the *Quality Care Statement* while it was drafted over a number of weeks.

CAA National President, Dr Andrew Lawrence, expressed gratitude to all Presidents for their efforts in regard to this matter. Despite the fact this was

a sometimes difficult path to tread, Dr Lawrence appreciated the spirit in which the discussions had been conducted. In the end the *Quality Care Statement* was agreed by a significant majority of Branch President's. As a consequence, the CAA National Board has tasked Dr Matthew Fisher, CEO with releasing the Quality Care Statement publicly

and sharing it extensively with Governments decision makers and regulators.

It is the expectation of the Board of CAA National that members will adhere to the requirements in the new *Quality Care Statement* in order to maintain the highest level of professional competence, conduct and ethics.

QUALITY CARE STATEMENT APPROVED: 14 NOVEMBER 2016

The Code of Conduct for Chiropractors

The Code of Conduct for Chiropractors was developed by the Chiropractic Board of Australia (the Board). It requires every practitioner to provide safe and effective health services within an ethical framework determined by National Law and the Board.

The Code of Conduct guides the expected standards of behaviour of all chiropractors, therefore all CAA members must be familiar with this code and apply the guidance it contains to their professional practice at all times.

In addition to the Board's Code of Conduct, all CAA members have agreed to the following requirements as a condition of their membership of the association to maintain a higher level of professional competence, conduct and ethics.

Care of infants and children

Best practice requires:

- placing the interests and wellbeing of the paediatric patient first;
- ensuring there is informed consent from the paediatric patient's parent or guardian;
- carefully explaining the risks of care and alternatives to care to the parent or guardian; and
- identifying any 'red flags' particular to the paediatric patient and investigating, managing, co-managing or referring to an appropriate health practitioner.

The Chiropractic Board of Australia emphasises best practice approaches to providing chiropractic care to children as published in peer reviewed literature and this evidence should be used to guide clinical practice and ensure chiropractors provide safe care.

Chiropractors are taught a range of techniques and should modify all care to suit the age, presentation and development of the patient.

When providing chiropractic care to infants and young children, practitioners must have a good understanding of the

principles of public health including disease prevention and health promotion. Chiropractic care includes the provision of advice on physical activity and posture, nutrition, injury prevention and a healthy lifestyle. Effective collaboration with other health practitioners is a fundamental aspect of good practice.

Immunisation

The CAA supports the Australian government's view that immunisation is an important health care initiative. It is outside the scope of practice for chiropractors. When considering immunisation, patients should consult with either their GP or Maternal and Child Health Nurse for further information.

Advertising

The Code of Conduct for Chiropractors requires every practitioner to provide safe and effective health services within an ethical framework determined by National Law and the Chiropractic Board of Australia. Practitioners have a professional responsibility to be familiar with the Code and to apply the guidance it contains.

With respect to advertising, this means all practitioners must comply with:

- all relevant consumer protection legislation, and state and territory fair trading Acts and, if applicable, legislation regulating the advertising of therapeutic goods; and
- standards, guidelines and policies of the Board including the National Board's Guidelines on advertising regulated health services, (the Advertising guidelines).

Practitioners who practise as private practitioners are regarded as carrying on a business and are therefore subject to the provisions of the Competition and Consumer Act 2010 governing the practice of traders. This can include misleading and deceptive conduct, and is enforced by the Australian Competition and Consumer Commission.

All claims in advertising must comply with National Law. The Chiropractic

Board of Australia stipulates that advertising claims which are contrary to high level evidence are unacceptable because these statements may be easily misinterpreted or de-contextualised and therefore mislead members of the public.

High level evidence will usually take the form of meta-analyses, systematic reviews or one or more high quality and well respected and acknowledged studies. All practitioners should be familiar with and understand the Statement on Evidence-based Practice published by the Chiropractic Board of Australia in December 2015.

Visiting health facilities and credentialling

The obligation to collaborate professionally with other practitioners involved in the management of a patient also applies when visiting a healthcare facility. A CAA member who visits a healthcare facility such as a hospital or community health centre to provide care to a patient must:

- first seek permission to access the facility and provide care;
- adhere to and follow the policies and procedures of the facility;
- communicate effectively with other practitioners involved in the management of the patient;
- keep the facility informed of any care;
- maintain professional indemnity insurance (PII) coverage that covers care in that facility, and
- keep adequate records.

The CAA supports the position of the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care with regards to credentialling. This is a process used to verify the qualifications and experience of practitioners to determine their ability to provide safe, high quality health care services within a specific health care setting. Credentialling is part of a wider organisational quality and risk-management system designed primarily to protect patients.