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Complaints about Chiropractors

The Chiropractors' Association of Australia (CAA) welcomes the release of new research published in [Chiropractic and Manual Therapies](#) by The University of Melbourne Medical School this week regarding complaints about chiropractors, physiotherapists and osteopaths.

It is pleasing to note from this research that the vast majority of chiropractors (over 90%) were not subject to a formal complaint or notification to health regulators during the six-year study period.

Of concern however is the finding that, within the chiropractic profession, 36% of complaints were generated by a small number of practitioners (1.3%). This finding is consistent with previous research about medical practitioners and suggests these practitioners could be the focus of additional educational and regulatory action.

Chiropractors are regulated by the Chiropractic Board of Australia and, like all other registered healthcare practitioners in Australia, must adhere to National Law and profession specific codes of conduct and guidelines. Guided by a nationally consistent law, AHPRA and the 15 National Boards work to regulate health professions in the public interest. This includes investigating concerns and complaints about registered health practitioners.

Both in Australia and around the world, chiropractic care is a low risk modality of healthcare. There have been few if any serious adverse events reported in medical literature in the past twenty years despite utilisation rates for chiropractors increasing significantly in this time. In summary:

- The safety record of chiropractic care in Australia is exemplary
- Chiropractic care has a very high expressed satisfaction rate with patients
- There is a significant existing evidence base and active research base in Australia and internationally that validates chiropractic care
- Chiropractors are university educated, nationally regulated healthcare professionals who care for and about their patients

The CAA endorses the Chiropractic Board of Australia's Code of Conduct to support chiropractors to deliver safe and effective health services within an ethical framework. All health practitioners have a duty to make the care of patients their first concern and to practise safely and effectively. Maintaining a high level of professional competence and conduct is essential for providing good care.

Registered health practitioners the subject of a notification in 2016-17¹

| Profession | % subject to a notification | Number of other statutory offence complaints |
|---------------|-----------------------------|---|
| Physiotherapy | 0.4 | 940 - almost all related to advertising breaches; 35 related to title protection. |
| Osteopathy | 1.1 | 252 - almost all related to advertising breaches; 2 related to title protection. |
| Chiropractic | 3.1 | 162 - the overwhelming majority of these matters related to advertising breaches. |
| Dental | 3.8 | 239 - the overwhelming majority of these matters related to advertising breaches. |
| Medical | 5.1 | 273 - over half related to advertising breaches, and the majority of the remaining matters related to title protection. |

Further information:

1. [Chiropractic Board leads the way as an evidence-based regulator](#)
2. [CAA Position Statement on Patient Care, Clinical and Professional Chiropractic Education](#)

¹ Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency, Annual Report 2016-17, Melbourne, November 2017 available at <http://www.ahpra.gov.au/annualreport/2017/downloads.html>