

Position statement

14 October 2015

Statement on paediatric care

The Chiropractic Board of Australia

The primary consideration of the Chiropractic Board of Australia (the Board) is to protect the public by identifying and managing risk.

The Board's decisions are guided by the [regulatory principles](#) of the National Scheme and are consistent with the Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory (National Law). The National Law, with a few small exceptions, does not regulate scope of practice only the use of restricted titles.

The Board is responsible for registering practitioners, setting professional and ethical standards, and holding practitioners to account against those standards.

The Board works in partnership with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) to ensure that the public has access to safe and competent services from this profession.

The Board expects all registered chiropractors to make the care of their patients their first concern and to practise safely and effectively.

Codes and guidelines

The Board's [Code of conduct for chiropractors](#) and [Guidelines for advertising of regulated health services](#) are published on its website.

These documents, and the Board's other codes and guidelines, make clear what the Board expects of registered chiropractors.

The [Code of conduct for chiropractors](#) helps guide practitioners' professional judgement, and makes clear the Board's expectations of good practice. Section 1.1 states:

"If professional conduct varies significantly from this Code, health practitioners should be prepared to explain and justify their decisions and actions, and serious or repeated failure to meet this Code may have consequences for registration"

The Code of conduct for chiropractors requires all chiropractors to practise in an evidence-based and patient centred context. Section 1.2 it states that, 'health practitioners have a responsibility to recognise and work within the limits of their competence and scope of practice.'

Section 3.7 sets out the Board's expectations about caring for children and young people, and requires chiropractors to place '*the interests and wellbeing of the child or young person first*'.

The [Guidelines for advertising of regulated health services](#) aim to make the law in relation to advertising clear, and help prevent false and misleading advertising. Practitioners should take care when advertising paediatric chiropractic services and make sure all advertising complies with the National Law.

The Board published more guidance on acceptable advertising in its September 2015 newsletter.

Paediatric care by chiropractors

Training in providing chiropractic care to children is included in accredited undergraduate chiropractic education.

What parents seek

Parents typically seek chiropractic care for their children for musculoskeletal disorders. In caring for children chiropractors may provide a range of care including manipulation, dietary and ergonomic advice, exercise, counselling and other manual therapies such as massage.

What the research says

Best practice approaches to providing chiropractic care to children are published in peer reviewed literature¹. This evidence should be used to guide clinical practice and ensure chiropractors provide safe care. Current research² indicates that the incidence of serious adverse events, either directly from manual therapy or indirectly by delayed or mis-diagnosis, is rare but real. Given the lack of good quality evidence about chiropractic care of children, more research is required to better understand this issue.

The Board's expectations

The Board requires practitioners to make sure their clinical practice is consistent with current evidence and/or best practice approaches. Clinical experience alone is rarely adequate to support clinical decision-making that is contrary to current evidence and/or best practice.

The Board expects practitioners to:

- discuss their proposed management plan with the parent/guardian
- inform the parent/guardian about the quality of evidence and explain the basis for the proposed treatment
- provide patients (or parent/guardian) with information about the risks and benefits of the proposed treatment and the risks of receiving no treatment
- understand that children have significant anatomical, physiological, developmental and psychological differences and needs from adults and that their management requires specific skills and expertise, including in relation to consent, examination, diagnosis, referral of 'red flags'³ and contraindications to care, and
- modify all care and treatment to suit the age, presentation and development of the patient.

Co-management and referral

When practitioners do not have the clinical skills and knowledge to appropriately assess and manage a particular paediatric patient, the Board expects them to refer the patient to another health care practitioner who has the appropriate skills, or to co-manage the patient with them. This should happen immediately when there are serious conditions that require urgent referral present i.e. red flags. In all cases, the patients' best interests must be the priority.

All patients

At all times, the Board requires practitioners to:

- consider the balance of benefit and harm in all clinical decisions
- obtain their patients' informed consent (See also section 3.5 of the *Code of conduct*) and
- practise in an evidence-based and patient centred manner.

The Board holds practitioners to account against published standards, codes and guidelines. Practitioners must be able to justify their conduct and performance against the standards set by the Board.

¹ Hawke et al, *Best practices recommendations for chiropractic care for infants, children, and adolescents: results of a consensus process* J Manipulative Physiol Ther. 2009 Oct;32(8):639-4

² Vohra et al, *Adverse events associated with pediatric spinal manipulation: a systematic review*. Pediatrics. 2007 Jan;119(1):e275-83.

³ Red Flags are indicators of possible serious pathology that requires urgent investigation and/or intervention

If people have concerns about a chiropractor

Anyone concerned about the health, conduct or performance of a chiropractor, can make a notification by following the 'Make a complaint' link from the [Board's homepage](#). All notifications will be assessed by the Board and decisions guided by the regulatory principles for the National Scheme.⁴

Complaints about a chiropractor's advertising can also be made [online to AHPRA](#) or by calling 1300 419 495 or in person at an [AHPRA office](#).

For more information

- Visit www.chiropracticboard.gov.au under *Contact us* to lodge an online enquiry form
- For registration enquiries: 1300 419 495 (within Australia) +61 3 8708 9001 (overseas callers)
- For media enquiries: (03) 8708 9200

⁴ Different arrangements are in place in NSW and Queensland, which means the Board can't receive complaints about health practitioners in these states and the relevant authorities are the Chiropractic Council of NSW and the Office of the HealthOmbudsman Queensland. However some Queensland cases may be referred to the Board