

# Ethical Codes and Standards of Conduct



Section 118 (I) of the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 provides that a function of the Podiatrists Board of New Zealand is to set Standards of Ethical Conduct to be observed by practitioners of Podiatry.

## Introduction

Ethical standards are a profession's definition of appropriate behaviour.

In setting out the following codes for ethical conduct, the Board emphasises that they are essentially broad codes of attitude and behaviour to be applied in concept. Similarly, the guidelines are not definitive in a narrow sense but are intended as an indicative expression of aspects of those broad codes. Furthermore, concepts of ethical conduct and the words to express them are dynamic in reflecting changes in professional treatment, attitudes and behaviour. The document is accordingly subject to regular review to maintain its relevance to contemporary practice.

All podiatrists are urged to apply the principles and intent of this document in all aspects of their professional practice.

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The Podiatrists Board acknowledges the Physiotherapists Board of New Zealand for their published "*Standards of Ethical Conduct*" which formed the basis of this document.

## Ethical Codes

The following Codes express the overriding intent of the Standards of Ethical Conduct.

### **Podiatrists should at all times:**

1. Act in the best interests of their patients.
2. Practise in accordance with acceptable professional standards.
3. Apply principles of best practice of podiatry to their professional activities.
4. Respect the rights and dignity of all individuals.
5. Comply with all legislation that governs and impacts both professional practice and research in the field of podiatry.
6. Accept responsibility to uphold the integrity of the profession.



## Guidelines for Ethical Codes and Standards of Conduct

The following guidelines are presented to Podiatrists to provide a more detailed explanation of the intent of Ethical Codes. They are not exhaustive but are included to expand on and illustrate the application of the Codes.

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Note: The following guidelines should be read in conjunction with the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumer's Rights.

### 1. Act in the best interest of their patients

- 1.1. The relationship between podiatrists and their patients is one of trust. The relationship of trust must never be abused. This includes not entering into a sexual relationship with a current patient.
- 1.2. Patients are entitled to be treated without discrimination on the basis of nationality, religion, age, gender, race, creed, politics, social status, sexual orientation, health status or disability.
- 1.3. When a patient's needs are beyond the scope of a podiatrist's expertise or the scope of podiatry, (as defined by the Podiatrists Board of New Zealand), the patient should be informed and assisted in identifying a person qualified to provide the necessary services.
- 1.4. Podiatrists should make provision for continuity of care when planning to be absent from their place of practice.
- 1.5. Podiatrists should limit their work, or stop practising, if their performance or judgement is affected by their health.
- 1.6. Podiatrists will work with other health professionals where these arrangements are properly constituted and agreed to by all stakeholders.

## 2. Practice

in accordance  
with acceptable  
professional standards.

- 2.1. Podiatrists must practice only in areas that they have a scope and are personally competent.
- 2.2. Equipment, premises and personal behaviour should be of an acceptable standard.
- 2.3. Financial transactions shall be carried out with honesty and recorded fully and accurately.

## 3. Apply principles of best practice of podiatry to their professional activities.

### **PODIATRISTS SHALL:**

- 3.1. Accept the ultimate responsibility for all aspects of their podiatric clinical care.
- 3.2. Ensure that treatments do not conflict with any other known treatment the patient is receiving.
- 3.3. Maintain adequate and appropriate professional development and competency.
- 3.4. Ensure that comprehensive, accurate and up-to-date clinical records are kept.
- 3.5. Keep the patient's referring health professional informed of the patient's progress and any concerns the podiatrist may have, subject always to the consent of the patient.

## 4. Respect the rights and dignity of all individuals

### 4.1. Patients shall have the right to:

- Be provided with sufficient information, including:
  - diagnosis
  - treatment plan
  - significant benefits, risks and side effects
  - prognosis
  - timeframes
  - results of tests
  - any costs to the patientin a manner they can understand in order to make an informed choice and give informed consent.
- Discuss treatment during its course.
- Voice any concerns about the state and quality of the service.
- Withdraw from or refuse treatment at any stage.
- Ask about treatment alternatives and to be told what is available in a manner which they can understand.

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Note: Where patients are deemed not competent to make an informed choice and give informed consent, refer to Right 7 clauses (2), (3) and (4) of the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights for guidance.

- Know the name and qualifications of the person giving the treatment.
- Have all information pertaining to them kept confidential and only divulged with their permission, except when the law otherwise permits.
- Seek a second opinion without prejudicing their subsequent treatment.
- Select or change their podiatrist where practicable.
- Be free from discrimination, coercion, harassment and sexual, financial or other exploitation
- Make a complaint.
- Expect the podiatrist to provide:
  - appropriate personal privacy
  - clean and safe facilities and equipment.

### 4.2. Podiatrists shall:

- Practise in a manner which is culturally competent and safe and in recognition of principles under the Treaty of Waitangi.
- Ensure that patients give informed consent to treatment by the podiatrist or by any other health professional under their direct supervision.

**5. Comply** with all legislation that governs and impacts upon the practice of, and research in the field of podiatry.

**PODIATRISTS SHALL:**

- 5.1.** Be familiar with and comply with, e.g., the Health Practitioners Competency Assurance Act 2003, Code of Health and Disability Consumers' Rights and the Health Information Privacy Code 1994.
- 5.2.** Obtain approval from the appropriate Ethics Committee before undertaking research.

**6. Accept** the responsibility to uphold the integrity of the profession.

**PODIATRISTS SHOULD:**

- 6.1.** Accept responsibility to ensure that behaviour, whether in another podiatrist or in another health professional, which may be considered unprofessional, is brought to the attention of the appropriate authority.
- 6.2.** Behave towards members of other health professions in accordance with professional and ethical standards.
- 6.3.** When involved in promotion:
  - Claim only those qualifications to which they are entitled.
  - Use advertising methods and/or material which do not bring the profession into disrepute.
  - Not engage in any conduct that is misleading as to the nature, characteristics and/or suitability for a purpose of any product and/ or service.

# Contacting the Podiatrists Board

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