



Use of Chiropractic Assistants

Purpose

This Guideline has been developed to assist practitioners on the employment and use of chiropractic assistants (support staff). This Guideline is the standard against which a registered chiropractor will be evaluated in relation to the use of chiropractic assistants within their practice.

Definition

A chiropractic assistant is a member of staff employed within a chiropractic practice who assists a registered practitioner in the efficient delivery of services to their patients. The extent to which a chiropractic assistant can be involved in treatment is defined in this Guideline.

The registered practitioner is always directly accountable for the scope of practice of the chiropractic assistant, the care the patient receives and remains vicariously liable for the conduct of the chiropractic assistant.

1. Role responsibilities

1.1 Employer

The employer has an obligation to provide the environment to which the following roles responsibilities can be fulfilled.

1.2 Registered practitioner

1.2.1 The registered practitioner has the responsibility to ensure that:

- the chiropractic assistant is clearly and correctly identified as a chiropractic assistant;
- the chiropractic assistant understands the limits of their responsibilities;
- the chiropractic assistant is trained to the level appropriate for the tasks required in the practice;
- the chiropractic assistant is provided with clear direction as to the work to be undertaken;
- there are clearly defined lines of communication between the chiropractic assistant and the registered practitioner;
- the quality of the work of the chiropractic assistant is regularly evaluated to ensure it is safe, effective, efficient and competent;
- at no time is a chiropractic assistant to be required or required to undertake a task which is outside their competency and cannot be delegated as defined in this Guideline;
- the chiropractic assistant does not undertake any restricted activities.

1.2.2 The registered practitioner must apply the following procedures personally and ensure that they are not delegated to a chiropractic assistant:

- the treating practitioner must assess the client prior to each treatment;
- the site, timing and scope of treatment must be clearly delineated by the treating practitioner at the time of treatment;
- the dosage to be received by the client must be set by the treating practitioner;

- the treating practitioner must undertake all warning and safety procedures, instruct the client of contraindications and the expected reactions of the modality to be applied;
- the treating practitioner must reassess the client at intervals that are deemed appropriate for the condition being treated.

1.3 *Chiropractic assistant*

The chiropractic assistant must:

- respect the rights and dignity of all individuals and be sensitive to their needs;
- maintain confidentiality of patient information;
- recognise the extent and limitations of their role responsibilities and only undertake activities that they are competent to perform;
- maintain high standards of personal behaviour and conduct;
- display professionalism toward other health providers.

2. **Employment of chiropractic students as chiropractic assistants**

Chiropractic students should not undertake employment where their developing knowledge as a student is being used to fulfil the requirements of a registered practitioner. Registered practitioners who employ chiropractic students as assistants must adhere to provisions contained in this Guideline.

3. **Training of chiropractic assistants**

Formal training for chiropractic assistants should be encouraged to ensure an appropriate knowledge base and minimum standards of practice. Such training should include:

- emergency procedures;
- confidentiality;
- basic chiropractic terminology;
- Chiropractic Biophysics (CBP) Assistants Certification (if applicable);
- other recognised courses for assistants.

Additional competence based training is required to meet any specific requirements of the particular workplace.

A review of performance should be conducted annually.

4. **Supervision of chiropractic assistants**

The chiropractic assistant is professionally responsible to and must work under the direction and supervision of a designated registered practitioner.

Supervision may be direct or indirect as identified by the registered practitioner and may depend on:

- practice setting and type of service;
- the nature of the task;
- the acuity and/or stability of the client's condition;
- the complexity of the patient's needs.

The lines of responsibility must be clearly defined in terms of employment, in relation to the supervising practitioner and in keeping with roles as defined in this Guideline. The position description should include the procedure to be followed should the designated registered practitioner not be present when applying a therapeutic procedure. A chiropractic assistant must have:

- a specifically designated chiropractic supervisor;
- documented instructions from the registered practitioner which are regularly reviewed;
- ready access to the supervisor on the premises.

5. **Reporting processes**

Where the chiropractic assistant may be undertaking activities away from the direct, visual supervision of the registered practitioner the job description should specify:

- the required methods, content and frequency of reporting;
- the process for reporting emergency situations to the appropriate health care professional.

6. Restrictions on chiropractic assistants

The chiropractic assistant **must not** under any circumstances:

- interpret referrals for chiropractic;
- interpret diagnosis or prognosis;
- interpret assessment findings;
- undertake restricted treatment procedures and goals of treatment;
- conduct formal history taking with patients (must not conduct the complete history);
- undertake restricted assessment procedures;
- develop a physical diagnosis;
- plan treatment programs;
- institute or modify treatment programs.

The registered practitioner must undertake the assessment, initiate treatment and instruct the chiropractic assistant precisely about the task to be performed and all relevant safety precautions. The chiropractic assistant should be instructed specifically in the cardinal signs of distress and the appropriate measures to be taken before/while summoning assistance.

7. Tasks which may be delegated

The chiropractic assistant may undertake receptionist, clerical and housekeeping duties according to the requirements of the service subject to the processes and procedures specified by the registered practitioner. Such processes and procedures should be developed in accordance with acceptable standards of:

- patient safety;
- quality assurance;
- award conditions of employment;
- occupational health and safety and welfare considerations.

The chiropractic assistant may undertake non-treatment activities as required by the practice, such as:

- escorting patients;
- reception of patients;
- preparing patients for chiropractic treatment;
- preparing equipment required for treatment.

The chiropractic assistant may also assist the registered practitioner:

- to lift/move patients;
- with group activities;
- with certain techniques, eg. cranials etc.

8. Treatment techniques/modalities which may be delegated

Following the appropriate assessment by the treating practitioner, the chiropractic assistant may prepare, apply and monitor and remove the following treatments:

- hydro collator packs;
- infra-red lamps;
- ice/heat packs.

In the event of the occurrence of pain, discomfort or unexpected change in the body part being treated on the patient, the application of the modality must cease and the matter be reported to the treating practitioner immediately.

The treating practitioner must ensure their role responsibilities as listed previously in this Guideline and bears full responsibility for the use and application of the modality.

9. Restricted activities which may not be delegated

The following activities may not be delegated to an assistant or any other person who is not a registered practitioner or a student on supervised clinical practice, under any circumstances. Thus, a chiropractic assistant may prepare for, but not apply:

- chiropractic examinations;
- electrotherapies;
- traction – manual and mechanical;
- acupuncture (insertion or removal);
- orthopaedic examination;
- neurological examination;
- radiology/radiography.

The chiropractic assistant may supervise the safety of clients receiving these treatment techniques/modalities. The registered practitioner must provide specific instructions for the assistant to act in an emergency while summoning assistance. The supervising practitioner must remain on-site during such treatments and be available to respond immediately.

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