



COUNCIL FOR THE PROFESSIONS COMPLEMENTARY TO MEDICINE

Code of Practice

Podiatry

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Occupational Description

Podiatry is a health care profession concerned with the diagnosis and management of diseases, injuries, and pathologies affecting the human foot, ankle and lower limb; including conditions that are caused by foot dysfunction. This is achieved through consultations and/or use of medicines and surgical procedures, alongside mechanical, physical, and adjunctive treatments.

Scope of Practice

The aims of the podiatry profession is to diagnose, prevent and treat conditions, diseases, pathologies and dysfunctions that affect or originate from the foot, ankle and lower limb in order to improve the patients quality of life and preserve foot health. This can be achieved, but is not limited to patient education, mechanical offloading, and the use of medicines, medical treatments and surgical procedures. To accurately diagnose foot ailments, podiatrists use medical imaging and laboratory tests, as well as physical examinations, gait analysis and various biomechanical tests. Podiatrists will ensure the best possible treatment for all patients using a number of techniques which include and are not limited to surgical techniques, medical and pharmacological advice and treatment, mechanical offloading with the use of chairside and/or functional/accommodative orthotic devices.

Furthermore, podiatrists may administer local anaesthetic or any other substance that they have been trained and are competent to administer. When an injectable substance – such as, but not limited to, local anaesthetic, corticosteroids, botulinum toxin, or other therapeutic agents – is administered, all relevant information such as dosage, quantity and site of injection should be recorded.

Finally, podiatrists diagnose, manage and prevent foot-threatening conditions in persons who fall under the high-risk categories which include but are not limited to: conditions which increase the risk of any pathology developing into tissue loss, ulceration and/or infection.

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1. Statutory jurisdiction of the Council. The Council for the Professions Complementary to Medicine is bound by Part V, Articles 27, 28 and Third Schedule of the Health Care Professions Act, 2003 (Cap. 464) to keep registers in respect of podiatrists and to prescribe and maintain professional and ethical standards for them

2. Part V, Article 25 (1) of the Health Care Professions Act, 2003 (Cap. 464) lays down that no person shall practice the profession of podiatry unless he/she is registered with The Council for the Professions Complementary to Medicine.

1. The Council for the Professions Complementary to Medicine is empowered to issue notices, containing ethical standards for podiatrists as laid down in Part V, Article 27 (1) (b) of the Health Care Professions Act, 2003 (Cap. 464).

2. As a professional group, podiatrists are committed to provide the best possible service to patients, having due regard to established and accepted code of practice, in particular section 257 of the Criminal Code of Malta Cap. 9 and Section D, paragraph (2 and 3) of the Code of Professional and Ethical Conduct regarding confidentiality on personal health information laid down by The Council for the Professions Complementary to Medicine.

3. Convictions. Disciplinary proceedings will be taken against any podiatrist if convicted for criminal offences by any Court in Malta and Gozo of a crime punishable by imprisonment for any term exceeding one year or for any of the crimes mentioned in Sections 198 to 209, both sections included of the Criminal Code, or for:

- Acts of immorality, indecency or dishonesty or any other act involving the abuse of professional relationship.
- Treating or examining patients while the podiatrist is under the influence of drink or drugs.
- Forgery, fraud, embezzlement, money laundering and cognate offences.
- Gross or prolonged neglect of duties and disregard of personal responsibilities to the patient.

4. The podiatrist should at all times act in such a manner as to justify public trust and confidence, to uphold and enhance the good standing and reputation of the profession, and to serve the public interest and the interests of patients.

5. With the view to the fulfilment of their professional responsibility and in the exercise of their professional accountability, podiatrists shall:

(A) With Reference to his/her Profession

1. Comply with the provisions of Part I of the Health Care Professions Act, 2003 (Cap. 464) and with any other laws affecting the profession.

2. Be accountable for his/her work.

3. Take every reasonable opportunity to sustain and improve his/her knowledge and professional competence.

4. Be prepared to request additional training/support when he/she perceives the need.

5. Inform the Council for the Professions Complementary to Medicine about any conscientious objection to the exercise of his/her professional practice.

6. Ensure his/her professional responsibilities and standards of practice are not influenced by considerations of age, sexual preference, religion, sex, race, nationality, party politics, social or economic status or nature of a patient's health problems.

7. Refuse to accept any gift, favour or hospitality that might be interpreted as seeking to exact undue influence to obtain preferential treatment.

8. Avoid advertising or signing an advertisement using his/her professional qualification(s) to encourage the sale of commercial products.

9. Not be in practice or professional association with a podiatrist/chiroprapist who is not registered by the C.P.C.M.

10. Confine his/her practice to the recognised field.

(B) With Reference to Relationships with Patients

1. Take cognisance of and respect the customs, values, spiritual beliefs and human dignity of patients.

2. Be considerate to the physical and physiological needs of patients and the effects on them of the hospital/clinic environment.

3. Refrain from making use of the privileged relationship with patients or the privileged access to their property.

4. At all times act in such a way as to promote and safeguard the well being and interests of patients for whose care he/she is professionally accountable and ensure that by no action or omission on his/her part their condition or safety is placed at risk.

5. Treat any information obtained from the patients or their records with confidentiality.

(C) With Reference to Relationships with Colleagues

1. Ensure that no unqualified person exercises the profession of Podiatry, or act as if he/she is duly qualified or registered. Nothing in this paragraph is to be regarded as affecting the proper training of bona fide students, provided that adequate and effective supervision is exercised over them.

2. Accept a responsibility relevant to his/her professional experience for assisting peers and

subordinates to develop their professional competence.

3. Take appropriate action if the workload and pressures on professional colleagues and subordinates are such as may endanger safe standards of practice.

4. Inform the authorities immediately if safe standards of practice are in any way endangered due to inadequate physical working conditions or resources.

5. Work in a collaborative and co-operative manner with other health care professionals.

6. When temporarily in charge of a colleague's patients, not attempt to influence such patients to abandon his practitioner. The methods of treatment originally employed should be upheld as far as is consistently plausible and no way disparaged. In consultation, due regard should always be paid to the podiatrist in charge of the case.

7. Ensure that unethical conduct and illegal professional activities are reported to The Council for the Professions Complementary to Medicine.

(D) Unprofessional Conduct

Saving for other provisions of law no registered podiatrist shall:

1. By any act or omission do anything or cause anything to be done which he or she has reasonable grounds to believe is likely either to endanger or adversely affect in a substantial way the health and/or safety of a patient or patients.

2. Knowingly disclose to any patient, or to any other unauthorised person, the result of investigations or any other information of personal or confidential nature gaining in the course of practice in his/her profession.

3. Disclose voluntarily without the consent of the patient, preferably written, information, including certification that he/she has obtained in the course of his/her relationship with the

patient. Exception to this rule is made only by the requirements of the local laws. Podiatrists are referred to the contents of section 257 of the Criminal Code of Malta Cap. 9 which reads as follows:

“If any person or who, by reason of his calling or profession or office, becomes the depository of any secret confided to him, shall except when compelled by law to give information to the public authority, disclose such secret, he shall, on conviction be liable to a fine (multa) not exceeding Lm 20,000, or to imprisonment for a term not exceeding two years, or to both such fine and imprisonment”.

4. Neglect the contents of paragraph (F) of this chapter relating to cross infection.

(E) Advertising and canvassing

1. Provision of service: Advertising by Podiatrists in respect of professional activities shall be accurate and professionally restrained.

2. It is unethical to solicit to potential patients, whether such solicitations are made physically or through any form of communication.

3. Advertisement whether written, or audio-visual, social media, should reflect the truth and should not be, fraudulent, misleading, deceptive, self-laudatory, unfair or sensational.

4. Claims should not be made extolling superiority of personal skills, equipment or facilities.

5. While it is correct for Podiatrists to publicise their profession and practice, they should act in a restrained manner with regards their personal professional practice.

6. Signs and professional plates should be dignified and professionally restrained, and shall indicate the Podiatrist's name, qualifications, any other diplomas or degrees registrable by The Council for the Professions Complementary to Medicine, the title and the hours of attendance.

(F) Cross Infection

In drawing up a statement of principles for commendation to its registrants, the Council is bound to take note of recommendations from other European countries with particular attention to EU and WHO Health Authorities. In cases of infected health-care workers, infection control measures, are required to be undertaken together with screening of health-care workers. In drawing up the statement, the Council requires Podiatrists to maintain the strict confidentiality in all dealings with their patients.

Statement of principles

1. Members of the profession have a duty to take appropriate precautions to protect their patients and staff from cross-infection.
2. Failure to provide and use the appropriate facilities and methods may be considered to be unprofessional conduct.
3. It is the ethical responsibility of members of the profession who believe that they may have been infected with any transmissible disease to obtain medical advice and, if found to be infected, to submit to regular medical supervision including counselling. It is the duty of such members of the profession to act upon the medical advice they have been given, which may include the necessity of ceasing practice altogether, or to modify their practice in some way in the best interest of protecting their patients. By failing to obtain appropriate medical advice, or to act upon the advice which has been given to them, members of the profession who know or believe that they may have a transmissible disease may jeopardise the well-being of their patients. Behaviour of this kind may, again, raise a question of unprofessional conduct.

Additional Notes to be read in conjunction with the Code of Conduct

If at any time, guidelines, codes or policies are considered to impede the safe and effective performance of podiatrist's duties, proposals for change should be initiated through The Council for the Professions Complementary to Medicine.

This code should be read in conjunction with Part V, Articles 25 to 28 of the Health Care Professions Act, 2003 (Cap. 464).