

Note to Readers: In the event of any inconsistency between this document and the legislation that affects chiropractic practice, the legislation governs.

Intent

To advise members on how to effectively and accurately communicate a diagnosis or clinical impression to patients.

Objectives

- To ensure patients receive an appropriate evaluation from the history, examination and diagnostic procedures as a prerequisite for the delivery of care.
- To ensure members respond to the clinical situation in a manner consistent with the best interest of their patients.
- To delineate members' responsibility under the *Chiropractic Act, 1991*.

Description of Standard

Diagnosis

Where a diagnosis is made:

- it must be communicated to the patient; and
- it must be recorded prior to treatment.

Note: The term "diagnosis" suggests a greater degree of precision and certainty than a clinical impression, which refers to a preliminary or working diagnosis.

Clinical Impression or Working Diagnosis

In the absence of a clear diagnosis, a working diagnosis or clinical impression must be determined and:

- it must be communicated to the patient; and
- it must be recorded prior to treatment.

Differential Diagnosis

When more than one diagnostic possibility is present, the member shall consider:

- the potential causes of the patient's complaint; and
- whether there is a need for referral.

Process

When additional tests are required to establish a clinical impression or a diagnosis, it is the member's responsibility to:

- fully inform the patient or an authorized person; and
- recommend a course of action.

Terminology

Diagnostic terms shall be used in a manner consistent with the generally accepted usage in the chiropractic profession; for example, vertebral subluxation complex, posterior joint syndrome and sacroiliac joint syndrome.

Legislative Context

Scope of Practice

The scope of practice of chiropractic is outlined in section 3 of the *Chiropractic Act, 1991*, and includes 'diagnosis' as follows:

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"The practice of chiropractic is the assessment of conditions related to the spine, nervous system and joints and the diagnosis, prevention and treatment, primarily by adjustment, of,

- dysfunctions or disorders arising from the structures or functions of the spine and the effects of those dysfunctions or disorders on the nervous system; and
- dysfunctions or disorders arising from the structures or functions of the joints."

Authorized Acts

The authorized acts for chiropractors are outlined in section 4 of the *Chiropractic Act, 1991*, and include ‘communicating a diagnosis’ as follows:

“In the course of engaging in the practice of chiropractic, a member is authorized, subject to the terms, conditions and limitations imposed on his/her certificate of registration, to perform the following:

- communicating a diagnosis identifying, as the cause of a person’s symptoms, a disorder arising from the structures or functions of the spine and their effects on the nervous system; or
- a disorder arising from the structures or functions of the joints of the extremities.