
COMMUNICATION TO THE PUBLIC



Guideline G-016

Quality Assurance Committee

Approved by Council: November 28, 2024 (came into effect February 21, 2025)

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

INTENT

Guideline G-016 is designed to detail Standard of Practice S-016 to provide further guidance and explanations of the general communication to the public requirements section of the standard of practice.

GENERAL COMMUNICATION TO THE PUBLIC REQUIREMENTS

Accuracy and Verifiability

Section	Standard of Practice	Explanation
1	A communication to the public must:	
1(a)	be accurate, factual and contain information that is verifiable;	<i>Providing the public with accurate, factual, objective and verifiable information to make an informed choice in health care is in the public's best interest. Subjective opinions may cause confusion and lack of trust.</i>
1(b)	be readily comprehensible by the target audience; and	<i>Advertisements should be readily understandable so the general public is not confused by the message.</i>
1(c)	clearly communicate that the member is a registered chiropractor in Ontario and a member of the College of Chiropractors of Ontario.	<i>It is important that the public be made aware that the member is a regulated health professional, a member of CCO and of CCO's role in regulating chiropractic in Ontario. This can be achieved by including a reference to the CCO website on a member's professional website and social media page.</i> <i>Advertisements must not mislead the public that the member belongs to another regulated health profession, such as the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario or the College of Traditional Chinese Medicine and Acupuncturists of Ontario. Members should use titles such as "chiropractor" "Doctor of Chiropractic" or</i>

		<p><i>“DC” and not use titles or representations which include but are not limited to the terms “medicine”, “physician”, “osteopath” or “neurologist” are misleading to the public. A member may list adjunctive therapies and modalities offered, such as acupuncture and nutritional or exercise counselling; however, it must be clear that they are offering these services as a chiropractor.</i></p>
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Permissible Content

Section	Standard of Practice	Explanation
2	A communication to the public may:	
2(a)	name a specific diagnostic or therapeutic procedure within the chiropractic scope of practice in accordance with Standard of Practice S-001: Chiropractic Scope of Practice, but cannot claim superiority or endorse the exclusive use of such a procedure	<p><i>Naming diagnostic or therapeutic procedures may assist the public in finding a particular type of chiropractic care and allow for a n informed choice. However, statements of superiority or exclusive use are unprofessional and inappropriate.</i></p> <p><i>Members may advertise services (e.g., acupuncture, ultrasound, radiography), adjunctive techniques, and other procedures within the public domain (e.g. orthotics, nutritional products). Members should understand exhaustive lists of everything possible may confuse the public and are not advised.</i></p>
2(b)	make reference to the member being a specialist, provided the member is recognized pursuant to CCO’s policy as a specialist, and the specialty is disclosed. Refer to Policy P-029: Chiropractic Specialties, for the list of specialties currently recognized by CCO	<p><i>Members may only use terms such as “specialist” and “specializing in” in reference to the specialties recognized by CCO outlined in Policy P-029:</i></p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>FCCS(C) - Fellow of the College of Chiropractic Sciences (Canada)</i> • <i>FCCR(C) - Fellow of the Chiropractic College of Radiologists (Canada)</i> • <i>FRCCSS(C) - Fellow of the Royal College of Chiropractic Sports Sciences (Canada)</i> • <i>FCCOS(C) - Fellow of the College of Chiropractic Orthopaedic Specialists (Canada)</i>

		<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • <i>FCCPOR(C) - Fellow of the Canadian Chiropractic Specialty College of Physical and Occupational Rehabilitation (Canada)</i> <p><i>Use of titles and terms such as “Paediatric Chiropractor”, “Obstetric Chiropractor”, or “Chiropractic Neurologists” will be perceived as a representation of a speciality. A member cannot advertise a specialty in area(s) not recognized by CCO. A member may express an “interest in” or “focus on” an area of practice.</i></p>
2(c)	make reference to the member being affiliated with any professional association, society or body, other than CCO, only on curriculum vitae, a biographical section of a member’s website or social media account, business stationery and recognized public displays;	<i>Advertising a member’s affiliations in any other medium may confuse the public and may cause comparisons to other members, which is not permitted. In electronic media, a member may include professional associations other than CCO, only in the curriculum vitae/biography section of a website or social media home page.</i>
2(d)	allow an individual or organization to endorse a member, provided, <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) the endorser has sufficient expertise relevant to the subject matter being endorsed; (ii) the member has been appropriately assessed as providing the subject matter being endorsed; and (iii) the member has disclosed any financial or other benefit given or received for the endorsement, if such a benefit has been exchanged. 	<i>An unqualified endorsement from a source with little or no expertise is not in the public’s best interest and undermines the public’s trust. The public has a right to know if there was any exchange in benefit for an endorsement.</i>
2(e)	(e) include testimonials, that refer only to the benefits of chiropractic and not to a particular member or office, or testimonials that refer to a particular member or office only in a member’s website, provided the testimonials: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) are accurate, verifiable, and recorded in the patient health record; 	<p><i>Testimonials that refer to the benefits of chiropractic and not to a particular member or office are permissible; however, members may continue to use specific testimonials on their websites.</i></p> <p><i>Testimonials must be truthful and verifiable, and evidenced in the patient health record.</i></p>

	<p>(ii) are used only in accordance with the written consent of the patient;</p> <p>(iii) are not obtained using any undue pressure, duress, coercion or incentives;</p> <p>(iv) include a disclaimer stating that the results of the testimonial may not be typical of all patients or that results of patients may vary,</p> <p>(v) do not include any information, testimonial or narrative about the member providing care to the member’s own family, and</p> <p>(vi) are otherwise compliant and consistent with the chiropractic scope of practice, privacy legislation, and CCO standards of practice, policies and guidelines.</p>	<p><i>There must be documented patient consent related to a particular testimonial, documented in the patient health record.</i></p> <p><i>Patients may only offer a testimonial under their own free will and not due to any coercion or compensation.</i></p> <p><i>Testimonials may not be indicative of results for all patients and often describe a particularly favourable individual patient outcome. A disclaimer communicates to the public that they should not necessarily expect such an outcome in their case.</i></p> <p><i>Testimonials and narratives about providing care to family members may be unreliable and present a conflict of interest.</i></p> <p><i>As with all advertising, use of testimonials must be consistent with the chiropractic scope of practice, as defined in the Chiropractic Act, 1991, and relevant legislation, standards of practice, policies and guidelines.</i></p>
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Prohibited Content

Section	Standard of Practice	Explanation
3	Any communication to the public with respect to a member’s practice must not contain:	
3(a)	anything false or misleading	<i>False or misleading statements, which include lying, leading one to wrong conclusions, creating a false impression, leaving out and/or making false or inaccurate claims, and undermine public trust in the profession.</i>
3(b)	an express or implied guaranteed success of care;	<i>Claims and guarantees of success are often not verifiable and may appear unprofessional. Members should not use expressions such as “will help” and “does relieve” which imply a guarantee. Members may use expressions such as “may be able to help” or “has been shown to relieve.”</i>

Guideline: Communication to the Public

3(c)	any comparison to another member's or other health care provider's practice, qualifications or expertise	<p><i>Comparison to any facet of another member's practice is unprofessional. The public and the profession are better served by positive and generic chiropractic messaging.</i></p> <p><i>Members should be cautious about using comparatives (e.g., more or better) in their advertising because they imply a comparison to other professionals and practices. Members may use words such as "safe" and "effective" to describe the chiropractic profession in general.</i></p>
3(d)	any expressed or implied endorsement or recommendation for the exclusive use of a product or brand of equipment used to provide services;	<p><i>Exclusive endorsements of products suggest superiority and imply a comparison, which is not permitted.</i></p>
3(e)	material that, having regard to all the circumstances, would reasonably be regarded as disgraceful, dishonourable or unprofessional.	<p><i>All advertisements must maintain professional integrity and serve the public's best interest.</i></p> <p><i>It is an act of professional misconduct to engage in conduct or perform an act that, having regard to all the circumstances, would reasonably be regarded by members as disgraceful, dishonourable or unprofessional.</i></p>

Communication of Fees

Section	Standard of Practice	Explanation
4	A member may communicate to the public their fee(s) for chiropractic services, including any services provided for donations to a charity, provided:	
4(a)	the communication is accurate, complete, clear and not misleading (e.g., no hidden fees);	<p><i>The public is entitled to full disclosure of what is and what is not included in the advertised fee. This includes any promotions that are offered by gyms, health clubs and other businesses where members are employed.</i></p>

Guideline: Communication to the Public

4(b)	<p>(b) the communication of a promotional fee:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> (i) expressly states the timeframe of the promotion, (ii) does not limit the promotional fee to a specific number of participants, and (iii) does not place an obligation on the patient for any follow-up appointments as a result of the promotional fee; and 	<p><i>To ensure there is no confusion or misunderstanding, the advertisement must indicate the exact timeframe in which the complimentary or discounted diagnostic or treatment services apply.</i></p> <p><i>Members of the public must all be given an equal opportunity to obtain the advertised complimentary or discounted diagnostic or treatment services. An advertisement that limits an offer to a certain number of participants may be misleading.</i></p> <p><i>A member may not use an advertisement for complimentary or discounted diagnostic or treatment services to pressure or coerce a member of the public to return for follow-up appointments.</i></p>
4(c)	<p>the communication of fees is presented in a professional manner; and</p>	<p><i>All advertisements must be presented in a professional manner, maintain professional integrity, and serve the public's best interest. Although discounted fees may be offered, online coupons, contests and giveaways are inappropriate.</i></p>

Communication of Exchange of Products/Services for Charitable Donations/Proceeds

Section	Standard of Practice	Explanation
5	<p>A member may communicate to the public the exchange of products/services for charitable donations, provided:</p>	<p><i>An advertisement that encourages philanthropy, if done professionally and ethically, serves the public's interest.</i></p>
5(a)	<p>the donations/proceeds are being collected for a registered charity, school or other organization that services the public interest ("charity");</p>	<p><i>The charity or organization must serve the public interest.</i></p>
5(b)	<p>the charity is disclosed in the communication; and</p>	<p><i>The public is entitled to full disclosure regarding the charity or organization for which proceeds are being collected.</i></p>
5(c)	<p>the amount/percentage donated to the charity is disclosed in the communication.</p>	<p><i>The public is entitled to full disclosure regarding how the proceeds will be divided.</i></p>

Solicitation of Business

Section	Standard of Practice	Explanation
6	A communication to a patient or prospective patient for the purposes of soliciting business must be appropriate to the standards of the profession, must be respectful of patient choice, and must not involve undue pressure, including pressuring a patient to bring a family member or guest to a subsequent treatment or appointment, and not promote unnecessary products or services. A member must not contact or communicate with or allow any person to contact or communicate with potential patients via telemarketing or electronic methods.	<i>Any communication to patients or prospective patients must be consistent with the advertising standard of practice, within the chiropractic scope of practice, professional and respectful of the public interest, and compliant with Canadian anti-spam legislation, no matter what the medium. Requiring a patient to bring another individual to any future appointment is a breach of privacy and is inappropriate.</i>