

Safe Practice Standard for Chinese Medicine

Overview

The Chinese Medicine Council of New Zealand (The Council) is charged under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (The Act) to protect the health and safety of the public by ensuring that Chinese Medicine (CM) practitioners are fit and competent to practise their profession. The Council has established standards of clinical and cultural competence and standards of professional conduct that all registrants must meet. The Safe Practice Standard relates to specific areas of practice that require more detail to enable practitioners to meet the Council's Competencies and standards.

The Council's competencies and standards also provide guidance for the Courts, Health and Disability Commissioner, Health Practitioners Disciplinary Tribunal, and the Council when a CM practitioner's conduct, competence or fitness to practise is brought into question.

Safe practice principles

1. CM practitioners must work within the limits of their own professional scopes of practice and competence and are accountable for ensuring that all CM services they provide are consistent with their educational skill level.
2. CM practitioners must identify and manage health and safety risks within their practice environment.
3. CM practitioners must communicate effectively ensuring ongoing informed consent.
4. CM practitioners must maintain accurate and up-to-date clinical records recorded at the time of consultation.
5. CM practitioners must keep CM knowledge and skills up to date through ongoing learning and interprofessional collaborative practice.
6. CM practitioners must be familiar, and comply, with legal and professional obligations.
7. CM practitioners must have arrangements in place to manage complaints, adverse events and medical emergencies.

Principle Guidance

Principle one - CM practitioners must work within the limits of their own professional scopes of practice and competence and are accountable for ensuring that all health services they provide are consistent with their educational skill level.

- Practise safely and competently to ensure you do not cause harm to tangata whai ora;
- Only carry out a technique or a type of treatment if you have the knowledge and skills to do so competently within your scope of practice;
- Recognise your own limitations and the special skills of others in diagnosis, prevention, and treatment, and refer accordingly. Such referral might be to another CM health practitioner or other health professional/s;
- Engage with prescribing primary health practitioner regarding increased monitoring when tangata whai ora are adjusting their medications, or there is a likely interaction with treatment and medication levels; and
- Assess the outcomes of treatment at regular intervals to determine if treatment should continue or cease, or if, and when tangata whai ora should be referred to another health practitioner or specialist.

Principle two – CM practitioners must identify and manage health and safety risks within your practice environment.

- Maintain a safe work environment for tangata whai ora, staff and colleagues and the protection of the public;
- Before any interaction with tangata whai ora, assess the risks posed to yourself, colleagues, other tangata whai ora and visitors and/or support persons;
- World Health Organisation¹ and Te Whatu Ora² Standard precautions for health care should be used for aspects of clinical practice including the following key elements: hand hygiene, personal protective equipment, respiratory hygiene and cough etiquette, safe use and disposal of needles and other sharps, aseptic technique and appropriate use of skin antiseptics, clinical equipment, cleaning and disinfection, safe waste management and safe handling of linen;
- Develop, and regularly review, a health and safety plan specific to your work environment;
- Identify and appropriately manage potential hazards and risks in your place of work;
- Understand the indications, precautions, contraindications, and risks associated with each aspect of treatment. This includes the application of restricted activities under the Act and the safe prescribing of herbal medicines; and
- When co prescribing Chinese herbal medicines with Western medications, CM practitioners should consider consulting or communicating with the prescribing health professional before providing herbal preparations. CM practitioner should also consult evidence-based information about herb/drug interactions prior to prescribing³. CM practitioners are advised to document the extent to which these considerations are given and conveyed to tangata whai ora.

¹ [Standard precautions in health care \(who.int\)](https://www.who.int)

² [COVID-19: Infection prevention and control recommendations for health and disability care workers – Te Whatu Ora - Health New Zealand](https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/communicable-diseases/COVID-19/COVID-19-infection-prevention-and-control-recommendations-for-health-and-disability-care-workers)

³ Braun, L., & Cohen, M. (2020). *Herbs & natural supplements: An evidence-based guide* (4th ed., Vol. 2). Elsevier.

Principle three - CM practitioners must communicate effectively ensuring ongoing informed consent

- You must give tangata whai ora the information they need or request, in a way they can understand, so they can make informed decisions in a way that respects cultural values and differences;
- You must ensure informed consent always remains valid; and
- You must adhere to the Council's informed consent standard.

Principle four - CM practitioners must maintain accurate and up-to-date clinical records recorded at the time of consultation

- You must adhere to the Council's clinical records standard and guidance documents.

Principle five - CM practitioners must keep CM knowledge and skills up to date through ongoing learning and interprofessional collaborative practice

- Be involved in learning activities to update your knowledge and skills throughout your career; and
- You must comply with Council's CPD (recertification) programmes.

Principle six - CM practitioners must be familiar, and comply, with legal and professional obligations

- Be aware of and comply with all laws and regulations that affect the practice of CM practice;
- Ensure services comply with the Code of Health and Disability services consumers Rights, including a known complaints process;
- Understand that laws and regulations may change, and it is your responsibility to keep up to date with those affecting your work;
- Maintain appropriate boundaries in your interactions with tangata whai ora, colleagues and the public;
- You must adhere to the Council's Professional Boundaries Standard and Guidance documents;
- If you have reason to believe a colleague is suffering from a health condition which could affect their ability to deliver care or place colleagues at risk, you are required to inform the Council; and
- Inform the Council immediately if any matter arises that could impact on your fitness to practise, such as a health condition, any criminal proceedings, a court conviction, or an investigation.

Principle seven - CM practitioners must have arrangements in place to manage complaints, adverse events and medical emergencies.

- As a provider, you must make sure that tangata whai ora who use your services have the ability to make a complaint, and that complaints are managed in a fair and timely manner;
- Maintain currency in first aid certification relevant to safety in clinical practice; and
- You must have a current accident and adverse event management plan and reporting policy in place which includes alignment with Te whakaora, te ako me te whakapai ake i te kino: National adverse events policy 2023.