

GCC Registrant Toolkit

# Enhancing Patient Care Through Effective Communication

Professionalism in chiropractic

Toolkit



# Enhancing patient care through effective communication

Patients value clear and effective communication. From initial enquiry through to the end of treatment, good communication between patient and chiropractor is critical to developing and maintaining a trusted relationship.

The professional healthcare approach to excellent patient care involves supporting patients in making informed decisions, enabling them to provide the necessary consent about their treatment. This support is provided by giving the required information in clear and understandable language that the patient will understand.

Of course, communication is about much more than words. Body language and the way you speak are both

powerful methods of communication that give patients, and colleagues, confidence and reassurance in your chiropractic ability and professionalism.

Clear communication with patients should be a priority for all chiropractors, not only to ensure that they are meeting their obligations under the GCC **Code**, but also to assure patients that they are valued, respected and supported throughout their treatment.

This toolkit provides registrants with guidance to support effective communication with their patients, providing practical advice to use in their practice.

## Communication in the Code of Practice:



**F:** Communicate properly and effectively with patients, colleagues and other healthcare professionals.

The relationship between a chiropractor and a patient is built on trust, confidence and honesty. You must communicate effectively with patients in order to establish and maintain a professional relationship and encourage patients to take an informed role in their care.

Other Standards in the Code that reinforce and link to the above:

**F1** explore care options, risks and benefits with patients, encouraging them to ask questions. You must answer fully and honestly, bearing in mind patients are unlikely to possess clinical knowledge.

**F2** have visible and easy-to-understand information on patient fees, charging policies and systems for making a complaint. These policies must include the patient's right to change their mind about their care, and, their right to refer any unresolved complaints to the GCC.

**F3** involve other healthcare professionals in discussions on a patient's care, with the patient's consent, if this means a patient's health needs will be met more effectively.

**F4** take account of patient communication needs and preferences.

**F5** listen to, be polite and considerate at all times with patients including regarding any complaint that a patient may have.

**F6** provide information to patients about all individuals responsible for their care, distinguishing, if needed, between those responsible for delegated aspects and for their day-to-day care. This must include the arrangements for when you are not available.

# Demonstrating professionalism through communications

## TOP TIPS:



### Listen to your patients

Good communication is about more than talking to a patient. Taking the time to actively listen to a patient is also key to establishing a good professional relationship. It conveys interest and respect for their viewpoint and sends a strong message that the patient's health is the priority. Two-way conversations can often lead to a deeper understanding of the patient, which could inform treatment decisions.



### Be empathetic

Empathy is an invaluable skill when interacting with patients. Being empathetic towards a patient's condition, how it impacts them, and their concerns about the treatment demonstrates understanding, respect and compassion. This empathy can reassure patients, helping them feel more comfortable before and during treatment.



### Use appropriate language

Communication using clear, non-medicalised language can empower patients to take an active role in their care. Chiropractors must ensure that the language used is balanced, appropriate and respectful so the patient can make an informed decision about their treatment.

Be prepared to repeat yourself and explain yourself in a variety of ways to make sure your message is understood.



### Consider tone of voice

How you speak to a patient is just as, if not more, important than the words you use. A friendly, respectful tone of voice can put patients at ease and sends a message that you are welcoming and take their care seriously. While the words you use can demonstrate your professional knowledge and abilities, it is through the tone of your voice that you can convey confidence in your professional approach to patient care.



"I remember sitting in on a new patient appointment with one of my great mentors who listened patiently to a gentleman who was clearly frustrated with the lack of knowledge demonstrated by other healthcare providers and their failure to provide an explanation.

"By slowly and precisely explaining the issue to the patient and using appropriate language, the patient began to understand the situation. It was the start of a great professional relationship.

Professionalism for me is simply about providing an honest, frank opinion at a level suitable to the patient's understanding and doing so without self-interest or gain."

Chiropractor



## Pay attention to body language

Be aware of your body language when engaging with patients. Positioning your body to face the patient and sustaining eye contact while talking, demonstrates that you are actively listening and giving the patient your full attention.

Be aware of the facial expressions and gestures that you are using. These can help convey confidence, authority and professionalism, which are vital in building a trusted relationship.

Scan your patient's body language to identify any signs that they may be feeling uncomfortable or nervous so that you can respond appropriately and try to put them at ease.



## Provide all the necessary information

Patients must be provided with all the necessary information before starting treatment. This requirement also applies to your website or other marketing materials, often the first time a patient will come into contact with you as a practitioner.

Patients want to know what to expect during their treatment. It is therefore essential that you take the time to explain how fees are charged, how long treatment sessions may take and when a patient should expect to see a positive change in their condition.

As part of obtaining informed **consent**, chiropractors should feel confident that patients understand their treatment options. By providing the right level of information at the right time, chiropractors can support patients to make informed decisions about their treatment.

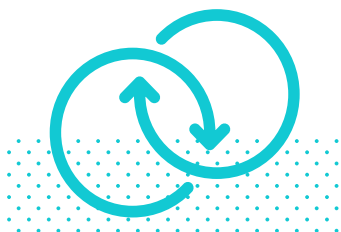


## Be open and transparent

Many patients want to be fully informed about their treatment and understand the risks and benefits specific to them. Even if the risks are perceived to be minimal, it's important to make the patient aware and explain how you will mitigate the risks.

People require clear and concise information to help them make an informed decision to choose chiropractic treatment. There is a need for transparency, for instance, about the cost of care. Openness and transparency encourage patients to be part of the decision-making process and help them feel reassured and confident in their treatment.

Sometimes, communicating potentially unwelcome information to a patient may feel challenging; however, these are important and meaningful conversations. They ensure all necessary information is shared, enabling the patient to make an informed decision about their treatment options.



## Build rapport

Engaging in a small amount of friendly, informal conversation is an excellent way to build rapport and put patients at ease. Through these interactions, you may learn more about a patient's lifestyle and other factors that could impact their treatment options and ability to manage their condition.

# Simple steps to effective communication



## RESPONSIVE

- Active listening
- Empathy
- Encourage patients to ask questions
- Rapport building

## VERBAL

- Respectful and friendly tone of voice
- Clear, non-medicalised language

## INFORMATIVE

- Transparency and accuracy regarding:
  - Treatment options
  - Risks and benefits
  - Timeline
  - Fees

## NON-VERBAL

- Open and welcoming body language
- Awareness of facial expressions and gestures
- Sustained eye contact when speaking with a patient, where possible

For further information go to  
**Professionalism | [gcc-uk.org/professionalism](https://gcc-uk.org/professionalism)**

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