

# **GCC Registration The Patients' Perspective**

## **GCC Patient Community: Project Three**



Registration and displaying your registration details shows that you are a properly vetted practice and are serious about giving good treatment to the highest standards...It shows that you are a properly qualified and registered to give chiropractic treatment. It legitimises your business, in line with other care professions and governing bodies. It is what patients expect.

**GCC Patient Community member**

# Contents

|  |    |
|--|----|
| Executive Summary.....   | 4  |
| One: Changing chiropractors.....   | 5  |
| Two: Influencing factors when selecting a chiropractor .....                                 | 6  |
| Three: What patients expect from chiropractic websites .....                                 | 8  |
| Four: Views on the ' <i>I'm Registered</i> ' mark design and supporting communications ..... | 9  |
| Five: Understanding of the GCC and regulations .....   | 10 |
| Six: Conclusion.....   | 11 |
| Seven: Recommendations with explanations .....   | 11 |
| Appendix One.....  | 13 |

# Executive Summary

As part of its 2022-24 Strategy commitments, the General Chiropractic Council (GCC) has established its GCC Patient Community comprising 20 chiropractic patients. The Patient Panel was refreshed in June 2023 and 12 new panel members were added to the panel and some existing panel members removed.

Its purpose is to inform the GCC of patient motivators, influences and perceptions on choosing a chiropractor, especially as this healthcare choice has a cost consideration.

The Patient Community will ultimately contribute the 'patient voice' to the GCC's decision-making processes.

- **Understanding GCC registration**

In June 2023, the GCC Patient Community held an online forum focused on understanding the value of GCC registration to patients and gauge reactions to communications that promote registration.

More specifically, the research set out to explore:

- the importance and relevance of GCC registration to patients.
- patients' views of the GCC '*I'm Registered*' mark and supporting materials that are available to chiropractors to promote their GCC registration.

- **Key findings**

- **Patients rely on personal recommendations when choosing a chiropractor.**

Half of the members of the Patient Community have selected their most recent chiropractor following a recommendation from a friend, family member or work colleague. Personal recommendations are key, coming from a trusted source who often had direct experience of chiropractic treatment.

- **Patients are reassured by the '*I'm Registered*' mark and expect to find it on a registered chiropractor's website.**

When asked to identify aspects of chiropractors' websites that they found reassuring, the Patient Community spontaneously picked out the '*I'm Registered*' mark. Other reassuring elements on practice websites include relevant images, qualifications, length of time in practice, FAQs, transparent fees and an online booking system.

- **Patients understand the message behind the '*I'm Registered*' mark.**

Members of the Patient Community understand the message conveyed by the '*I'm Registered*' mark, noting that the mark demonstrates that registered chiropractors work to specific standards and are well trained.

- Recommendations
- **For the GCC** to raise awareness of the *'I'm Registered'* mark amongst patients and the general public and encourage those seeking chiropractic treatment to check the GCC register before visiting a chiropractor.
- **For registrants** to reassure patients by promoting their GCC registration via the *'I'm Registered'* mark on their website, across social media channels and in their waiting areas.
- **For patients** to consider GCC registration as a key factor when choosing a chiropractor and proactively check that their chiropractor is registered with the GCC by looking for the *'I'm Registered'* mark and searching the GCC's register.

## One: Changing chiropractors

The importance of building relationships with a chiropractor was highlighted by the Patient Community. However, over half of members have received chiropractic care from more than one chiropractor.

### GCC Patient Community:

Based on their experiences, members of the patient community highlighted several reasons for changing chiropractors. These include:

- Patients moving out of an area (permanently or on vacation) – making it unfeasible to travel to see the same chiropractor.
- Patients receiving treatment from a practice with more than one chiropractor and not having a preference for which chiropractor they saw when making the appointment i.e. loyal to the practice rather than a chiropractor. Furthermore, some patients remained with a practice after their original chiropractor had left and a new chiropractor was brought in.
- Patients being dissatisfied with the cost and/or quality of chiropractic care they received from the original chiropractor they saw, forcing them to seek an alternative professional.
- Patients seeking out particular types of treatment not offered by the chiropractor they were initially with.

### What the Patient Community members said:

"I have seen more than one chiropractor over the years because of lack of availability. But most recently I visited the same one as I don't want to explain my problems over again to somebody new. I enjoy knowing what is coming next and discussing progress with somebody I trust."

## Two: Influencing factors when selecting a chiropractor

**Members of the Patient Community are primarily influenced by personal recommendations when choosing a chiropractor.**

### **GCC Patient Community:**

- Personal recommendations are key.

Half of the Patient Community selected their most recent chiropractor based on a recommendation from a friend, family member or work colleague. These personal recommendations were considered key as they were from a trusted source who often had direct experience of the chiropractic treatment.

#### **What the Patient Community members said:**

“I was recommended to the chiropractor I used by a friend who has used them for about 6-7 years, so for me, that was good enough. I always believe the best form of advertising is word of mouth. Someone also recommended the chiropractor to him, so it just seemed sensible.”

- Recommendations received from other sources are also important.

Members of the Patient Community also value recommendations from other sources, including their GP and from their workplace. Using local internet groups (facebook, nextdoor.co.uk) to actively seek out recommendations from those living in the local area was also highlighted by the Patient Community.

- Internet searches and online reviews influenced choice and offered further reassurance.

Patients who did not have a recommendation for a chiropractor use Google searches for local chiropractors, taking note of Google reviews, Trust Pilot reviews and the information on chiropractors' own websites. Review sites are also used to double check personal recommendations.

#### **What the Patient Community members said:**

“I would check that they are well staffed and have good testimonials on their website. I would check any reviews. I would check their costs too. I would check they are adequately qualified by being registered with the General Chiropractic Council (GCC) and also a Member of the Royal College of Chiropractors.”

- Choices driven by health insurance requirements.

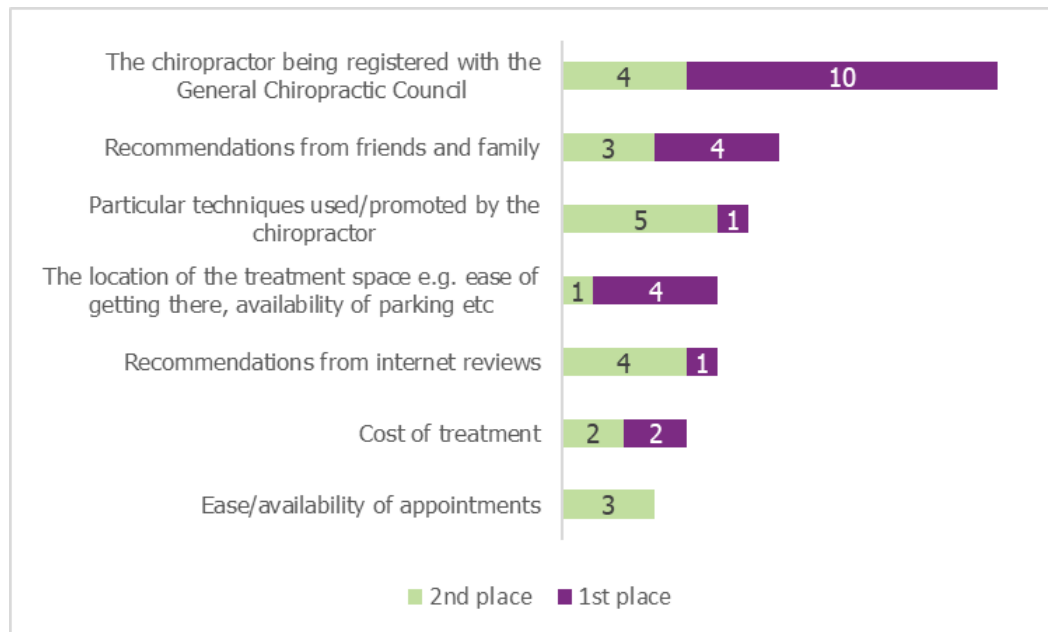
Several members of the Patient Community also check that a chiropractor is a registered health professional to ensure health insurance coverage.

### What the Patient Community members said:

“....I can search via google but I need to ensure that they are registered properly to claim on my health plan so also search via the General Chiropractic Council website.”

- When prompted, other influencing factors also drive choice.

When prompted to rate seven factors in order of importance when selecting a chiropractor over half of the members of the Patient Community place registration with the GCC as the second most important factor.



## Three: What patients expect from chiropractic websites

Members of the patient community reviewed the websites of 3 chiropractic practices and gave feedback on the information they found a) reassuring or off putting and b) that gave them confidence in the chiropractic clinic.

### GCC Patient Community:

- The 'I'm Registered' mark is reassuring.

Most of the Patient Community quickly noticed the '*I'm Registered*' mark on all three chiropractic websites, describing the mark 'as expected' and 'reassuring'.

The need for the mark to be used in a consistent manner was highlighted, with one member noting that one website had used both a black and white version and a coloured version.

Some concerns were raised about unregistered chiropractors being able to use the mark and the need for the GCC to find a way of ensuring it can only be accessed and used by registered chiropractors.

- Information patients like to see on a chiropractor's website.

When asked what information is important to include on a practice website, members of the Patient Community reactively positively to the following:

- Pictures of individual chiropractors.
- Information about chiropractors' length of practice, qualifications and any specific areas of expertise and/or published work.
- Electronic booking systems.
- Easy to find cancellation and complaints policies.
- An FAQ section that is sufficiently detailed, with information on what to expect at a session particularly welcomed.
- Well explained chiropractic treatments.
- Clearly advertised pricing structures.
- Testimonials from past patients.
- Clear indication of opening hours and appointment availability.
- Clearly visible contact details.

- Patients expect a level of professionalism.

Although the Patient Community is reassured by the '*I'm Registered*' mark, members lose confidence in a chiropractic practice if its website lacks professionalism. For example, the use of poor quality and ambiguous imagery and the use of jargon that is not sufficiently explained. Members also criticised websites that do not have easy to find opening hours and contact details.

### What the Patient Community members said:

"(This website) is just a very, very vague website. So even though the chiropractor is registered with the GCC, I don't really get a lot of confidence from this website overall."



## Four: Views on the ‘I’m Registered’ mark design and supporting communications

The Patient Panel agreed that the ‘I’m Registered’ mark offers reassurance about the legitimacy of the chiropractor, agreeing that it is extremely important for chiropractors to display the mark across a range of different channels.

One member noted that the mark is only important if patients are aware of it and understand its message.

### GCC Patient Community:

- A simple and eye-catching design

The design of the ‘I’m registered’ mark was positively received by the Patient Community who describe the mark as ‘eye-catching’, ‘official’ and ‘simple’.

#### What the Patient Community members said:

“I like that it is clear and eye catching. The blue background and big bold capital letters really grab my attention. I like the "I'm registered" wording as I find that really reassuring.”

- A clear message

The Patient Community picked up on and understand the intended messages behind the ‘I’m Registered’ mark, namely that it demonstrates chiropractors are registered with the GCC, are working to a specific standard and are well trained. These messages help patients feel more confident about their chiropractic treatment and reassured that they are in safe hands.

#### What the Patient Community members said:

“(The mark is) trying to convey that the chiropractic practice is safe, well-qualified, subject to accountability, part of a community of practice and monitored. These are all implications of being registered with a monitoring or governing body.”

- The importance of displaying the mark

The overwhelming majority of Patient Community members agree that it is extremely important for chiropractors to display the mark to reassure patients that they are being treated safely by a professional and to empower patients by giving them information to help make a more informed decision about their treatment.

There are expectations about where chiropractors should feature the mark. This includes:

- On the chiropractor’s website, for example, on the home page, in the About Us section.

- On social media accounts.
  - On any paperwork, including leaflets, business cards and receipts.
  - At the practice itself – in prominent positions in reception, in each treatment room, on the window.
- Supporting materials to underpin the importance of registration.

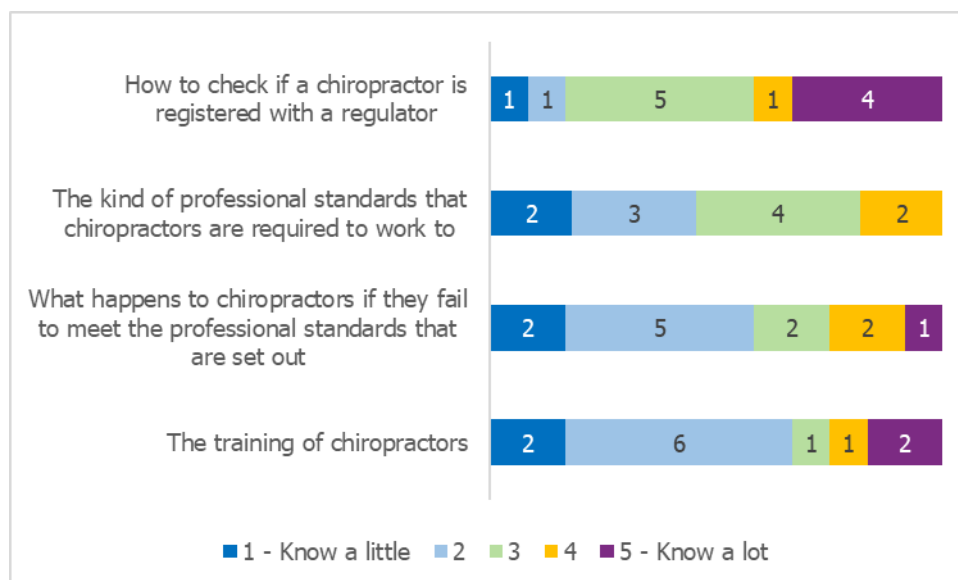
Members of the Patient Community welcomed the supporting materials, including the poster and gif, which help to underpin the importance of registration.

## Five: Understanding of the GCC and regulations

**Although recognition of the GCC and regulators in general is low amongst the Patient Community, there is an understanding of the general role of regulators in protecting patients and upholding standards.**

- Members of the Patient Community are not fully aware of the different aspects of chiropractic regulation.

Although members of the Patient Community understand the general role of the GCC and the importance of the registration, they are not fully aware what this means for the chiropractic profession, for example, the professional standards and training requirements to become a chiropractor.



- Understanding of the GCC impacts views about the importance of registration

The value of registration becomes even more important to patients when there is greater understanding of the GCC's role and specifically, that it is illegal for a chiropractor to practice without being registered with the GCC and that the title of chiropractor is protected.

- There is confidence in the chiropractic profession

Even without a thorough understanding of chiropractic regulation, members of the Patient Community have confidence in the profession, citing the positive reviews and comments they have heard about chiropractors.

#### **What the Patient Community members said:**

“I can’t say I hear any bad words in general towards chiropractors so I would believe that they are doing the right thing and practising in the patients best interest.”

## **Six: Conclusion**

Patients undoubtedly recognise the value of GCC registration and the importance of chiropractors promoting their registration. However, GCC registration is not spontaneously given by patients as a primary factor when selecting a chiropractor.

That said, when prompted, over half of the Patient Community ranked GCC registration as one of the most important factors when selecting a chiropractor. This suggests registration works as a hygiene factor rather than a motivating factor i.e., it does not drive patient choice, but it is expected.

It is worth noting that the value of registration becomes even more important to patients upon learning that it is illegal for a chiropractor to practice without being registered with the GCC and that the title of chiropractor is protected.

#### **The ‘I’m Registered’ mark**

Patients are reassured by the ‘I’m Registered’ mark and believe it is important for chiropractors to use the mark on their practice websites and other channels. The message behind the mark is clear - that registered chiropractors are part of a recognised profession, adhere to specific standards and undergo recognised training.

## **Seven: Recommendations with explanations**

- For the GCC to raise awareness of the ‘I’m Registered’ mark amongst patients and the general public, reinforcing messages around chiropractic standards and training.

Although members of the Patient Community recognise the importance of GCC registration and are reassured by the ‘I’m Registered’ mark, it is not considered a priority when choosing a chiropractor. This is perhaps because there is low awareness of the mark and the role of the GCC amongst patients and members of the public.

We will consider a public awareness campaign to promote the *'I'm Registered'* mark and highlight why GCC registration matters so it becomes an influencing factor when selecting a chiropractor.

- For registrants to reassure patients by promoting their GCC registration via the *'I'm Registered'* mark and supporting materials.

Through consistent and regular communications, we will encourage registrants to use the *'I'm Registered'* mark on their practice website and across social media channels. Using the findings from the Patient Community we will reinforce the value and importance of GCC registration to patients. We will also engage with chiropractors who are already using the mark to demonstrate the benefits, and ease, of communicating GCC registration.

- For patients to consider GCC registration as a key factor when choosing a chiropractor and proactively checking that their chiropractor is registered with the GCC by looking for the *'I'm Registered'* mark and searching the GCC's register.

We will engage with patients via our social media channels to reinforce messages around GCC registration and the delivery of the highest standards of patient care and urge patients to proactively check for the *'I'm Registered'* mark before choosing a chiropractor.

## Appendix One

- Research methodology

The 12 new panel members, alongside 10 existing panel members, took part in an online forum, hosted in Recollective. The forum took place over approximately seven days and patients were asked to log on around five times during this period and respond to a series of specific activities that involved:

- Patients sharing information about how they selected their current chiropractor.
- A website browsing activity where patients explored two different websites displaying the GCC mark, with the aim of understanding spontaneous reactions to registration.
- Patients sharing their views on the mark itself and the materials intended to support it.

- Profiles of the Patient Community

In total, 22 chiropractic patients completed the online forum. The table below summarises the key demographics and behavioural characteristics represented by the panel:

| Criteria   | Number   |
|--|--|
| Patient community size                               | 22   |
| (Existing panel members)                             | (10)   |
| (New panel members)                                  | (12)   |
| Recency of chiropractic visit                        | All visited in the last 12 months<br>New panel members had all visited within the last 3 months    |
| Number of years since first sought chiropractic care | 3 x less than 12 months ago<br>7 x 1-3 years ago<br>3 x 3-5 years ago<br>9 x more than 6 years ago |
| Country/Region                                       | 15 x England<br>2 x Northern Ireland<br>4 x Wales<br>1 x Scotland                                  |
| Gender   | 13 x Female<br>9 x Male  |
| Age  | 5 x Under 35<br>15 x 35-65<br>2 x 65+  |
| SEG  | 5 x AB<br>12 x C1C2<br>5 x DE  |
| Ethnicity  | 5 from a minority ethnic group   |
| Long-term condition or disability                    | 4 with a long-term health condition  |

- Patient Community member quotes






On occasion, quotes from GCC Patient Community members have been edited or amended for grammatical and ease of reading/interpretation reasons. The context and outcomes of all quotes have not been changed in any way. A copy of the original, unedited quotes can be provided upon request.


**General Chiropractic Council**

Park House  
186 Kennington Park Road  
London  
SE11 4BT

T: +44 (0) 020 7713 5155  
E: [enquiries@gcc-uk.org](mailto:enquiries@gcc-uk.org)  
W: [www.gcc-uk.org](http://www.gcc-uk.org)

**How would you rate this document?**



Click a face, or scan the QR code to share your views