

Monday 6th April 2020

Dear Practitioners,

We are now approaching the end of our second week in COVID-19 Alert Level 4. The Board is acutely aware of the unfamiliar territories we are in as we work our way through the biggest public health challenge seen in recent times. This continues to present a great challenge to both our public and private health sectors and the Board would like to sincerely thank you all for the dedicated work and care you provide to your patients. This work and care would be impossible without you looking after yourselves. We hope you are finding time for that also.

This unfamiliar territory has been challenging for our Board also. We have been meeting regularly via teleconference. Gathering and understanding new information has been challenging, as the COVID-19 situation is constantly developing, raising new issues to consider. We recognise the need for a pragmatic regulatory approach at this time. We are working hard to maintain this, whilst achieving our mission of protecting the public through effective regulation of the podiatry profession.

We appreciate that practitioners have been flooded with information from a multitude of sources and this can be confusing. To clarify, we have published responses to some questions we've been asked. These may apply to you, so please read them.

At this time, Podiatry is **NOT** on the list of essential health and disability services, with the exception of Podiatrists employed by "District health boards and all DHB provided and funded services and support staff". If you do not fall into that category you **must not provide any in-person podiatry treatments during Level 4 as a non-essential worker.** Please note that under s. 70 of the Health Act 1956, Medical Officers of Health may call on Police to detain people who refuse to close non-essential (in person) services. You can, however, provide electronic (Telehealth, Zoom, phone call) services to your patients (within contractual requirements) where suitable. Clinical records must be maintained and must include how the consultation took place (Telehealth, phone call etc). If you are unfamiliar with Telehealth practice, now is a good time to investigate whether these services may benefit your patients.

Our Board has well established Ethical Codes and Standards of Practice that can assist you in decision making. Please continue to apply such guidance as far as it is practical.

For any of our practitioners involved in Essential Services/Acute care provision, please ensure you are aware of the latest Ministry of Health information. The DHB's are holding the supply of all PPE within their geographic areas and this will be released to practitioners as needed. Please contact your local DHB supply department or infection prevention and control department if you are providing contractual work and require supplies.

The Ministry of Health is looking to increase the health workforce capacity. They are seeking expressions of interest from health professionals (such as podiatrists) who are able and willing to work for a limited amount of time, as part of the national strategic approach. If you are willing and able, please [find out more](#).

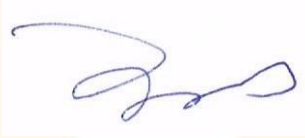
Podiatry New Zealand (PNZ) Offer:

In their latest newsletter, PNZ has invited non-members: to join them in their online forums and CPD at no cost for the next month. The Board extends its gratitude to PNZ for offering this at this time of great need. We all need to work together and provide support for one another, the wider health community, our families and the community in general.

Please note that all links, whilst current at the time of writing, are subject to change. Please keep checking the latest information at the Ministry of Health website. Accordingly, our Board will continue to send out regular communications. Please contact us at annabel@podiatristsboard.org.nz if you have any questions or a matter you would like to discuss.

Please continue to take care of yourselves and your communities. Be kind, inclusive and maintain and uphold the lockdown rules and guidelines.

Kind regards



Fiona Angus
Chair
Podiatrists Board of New Zealand

Frequently Asked Questions

If I can't see patients in person, can I still practice?

Whilst you should not be providing any nonessential/routine (elective) podiatry treatments, you can (and should) still provide care to your patients by providing a telephone/videoconference contact service and triaging patient needs. This is important for practitioner accountability. The Board understands several practitioners are upskilling in Telehealth services which is an excellent way of providing a service to some of your patients at this time. It is essential to maintain patient confidentiality and to gain and document consent from the patient, whilst providing these services.

Will Podiatry be put on the Essential Services List?

The Podiatrists Board is of the view that, for the benefit of some patients, Limited Podiatry Services must be on the Essential Services List. We are working with the Ministry of Health to achieve this.

Will Podiatry be on the list of ACC Telehealth Providers?

The Board is in favour of Podiatrists being on the list of ACC Telehealth Providers. Our current understanding is that ACC is working with your professional body, Podiatry New Zealand (PNZ) to achieve this. The Board has reached out to PNZ and to ACC to offer any assistance in facilitating this inclusion.

I have been asked by an approved Essential Health Worker (Dr/Hospital Podiatry Service/Specialist) to provide urgent care for a patient, can I do this?

The Board believes that this would fall under the category of Urgent and Essential Care. We are seeking clarification from the Ministry on this. A clearly documented pathway, outlining the request (in writing/email), the communication and information sought and where and when treatment was provided, is necessary. Please keep a log of such activities and advise the Board that you are undertaking these activities. It is important that we are aware of what practitioners are doing in this current environment.

Will the COVID-19 impact CPD requirements?

The Board believes that practitioners can still easily meet the requirements of their CPD. We will continue to update our Board approved CPD providers, available online here

The following are PPE instructional links:

<https://www.health.govt.nz/system/files/documents/pages/hp7353-ppe-donning-and-doffing-guidance-28mar20.pdf>

<https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-information-specific-audiences/covid-19-personal-protective-equipment-essential-workers/personal-protective-equipment-use-non-health-essential-workers>

The links above apply to infection prevention and control CPD activities.

The following count towards other CPD categories.

<https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-information-specific-audiences/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-resources-health-professionals/managing-patients-and-reporting-using-telehealth-and-online-tools>

<https://www.health.govt.nz/our-work/diseases-and-conditions/covid-19-novel-coronavirus/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-information-specific-audiences/covid-19-novel-coronavirus-resources-health-professionals/covid-19-questions-and-answers-primary-health-care-workers>