

## **Guidance Statement for Podiatrists cutting fingernails**

### **Background**

Under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (HPCAA), the Podiatrists Board (**the Board**) is charged with ensuring that podiatrists (practitioners) are competent and fit to practise in order to protect the health and safety of the public when receiving podiatry treatment.

The Board requires that podiatrists are registered with the Board, and must meet the continuing competence requirements of the Podiatrists Board Re-certification Framework (PBRCF) to ensure a safe standard of competence is maintained.

### **Scope of Practice**

The general scope of Podiatrist is defined as follows:

#### **Podiatrist**

A registered primary health care practitioner (including those previously registered as a chiropodist) who utilises medical, physical, palliative and surgical means other than those prescribed in the Podiatric Surgeon Scope of Practice, to provide diagnostic, preventative and rehabilitative treatment of conditions affecting the feet and lower limbs.

#### **Qualification**

A Bachelor of Health Science in Podiatry from an accredited New Zealand University or a National Diploma in Podiatry or Chiropody from the Central Institute of Technology or equivalent overseas qualification as determined by the Podiatrists Board.

## Guidance for Practitioners

As the scope of practice specifies a particular anatomical area of the body on which podiatrists may practice podiatry, it is considered that the cutting of fingernails is not part of a podiatrist's scope of practice.

However, the Board guidance remains that podiatrists can elect to cut fingernails. If a podiatrist elects to cut fingernails they must also ensure adherence to the Board's [Principles and Standards for the Practice of Podiatry in New Zealand \(PSPPNZ\)](#). Adherence to the PSPPNZ is an obligation of every registered podiatrist at all times. The PSPPNZ identify the standards against which the public can expect safe and competent practice. Podiatrists are also expected to comply with the Board's [Ethical Principles and Standards of Conduct](#).

The Board recognises that the cutting of fingernails is not classed as restricted activity under s 9 of the HPCAA and that it is also a service that is often conducted by non-regulated treatment providers.

If a podiatrist does elect to cut fingernails as a registered health care provider, they remain subject to regulation by the Health and Disability Commissioner and must comply with the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights (**Code of Rights**). The Code of Rights contains rights that are likely to be relevant where a podiatrist elects to cut fingernails:

- Right 4 provides that a patient has the right to have services provided with reasonable care and skill and in compliance with any applicable legal, professional, ethical, and other relevant standards. We consider that the podiatrist would be expected to have the necessary training and experience to ensure they are competent to safely cut fingernails.
- Rights 6 and 7 provide the right to be fully informed, make an informed choice and give informed consent. A podiatrist would need to ensure every patient receiving the treatment was given the level of information about the procedure that a reasonable patient, in that patient's circumstances, would need to make an informed choice or give informed consent to receiving the treatment.

Podiatrists electing to cut fingernails who work in a public facility must also ensure they meet any requirements of their supervisor and employer and any other requirements relating to the provision of health services.

Podiatrists should also ensure that their professional indemnity insurance arrangements provide cover for all aspects of their practice, including any practice that is outside the scope of podiatry practice.

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