

## Guidelines on providing Podiatry Services for Whanau/Family Members

Although the decision to treat whanau/family members can be left to the discretion of the practitioner, the following factors should always be considered:

- The treatment of whanau/family members has the potential for independent clinical judgment to be compromised due to whanau/family ties or pressure.
- Each practitioner needs to make the judgement whether the above risk is likely to be outweighed by the treatment benefits to the whanau/family member.
- While the decision to treat whanau/family members should be approached with caution, exceptions might be where the treatment is needed in an emergency or takes place in communities where there is limited access to appropriate treatment.
- It is the practitioner's responsibility to understand the potential risks noted above. Moreover, the appropriate level of treatment is an important factor, and evaluation of the possible risks in each specific circumstance is needed on a case-by-case basis.
- This consideration **does not** supersede any policy/procedural requirements placed upon the practitioner by their employer/funding agency, where the patient is not paying for the service directly. For example, if you are a registered ACC Treatment Provider you must follow ACC's Guidelines for the Treatment of Family members and those close to you found [here](#).

- The practitioner needs to be aware that there is the potential for professional objectivity to be compromised, which may unduly influence the level of care being delivered, for example:
  - Patients may feel uncomfortable disclosing sensitive medical information, which could potentially compromise treatment; or
  - In the treatment of a minor over which a practitioner has guardianship rights, the consent of any other guardian to the proposed treatment should be sought and obtained;<sup>1</sup>
  - It should be noted that in some situations minors can refuse care from their parents.
- The onus lies upon the practitioner to defend any allegations arising from the treatment of whanau/family members. They will need to demonstrate that they have acted reasonably and in the best interests of the patient.
- A second opinion should be sought where a practitioner is unsure as to whether to proceed with treatment.

**Reviewed September 2024**

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<sup>1</sup> Sections 16 and 36(3) of the Care of Children Act 2004.