

Standards of Clinical Competence for Chinese Medicine Practitioners

Purpose

The Chinese Medicine Council of New Zealand (The Council) has been appointed under the Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 (the HPCA Act) to protect the health and safety of the public by ensuring that Chinese medicine (CM) practitioners have an assured level of knowledge, experience and skill and are competent to practise CM. The Council is required to set standards of clinical competence, cultural competence (including competencies that will enable inclusive and respectful interaction with Māori), and ethical conduct to be observed by health practitioners of the profession.

The competencies describe the threshold or minimum level of professional capability required for both initial and continuing practise. A practitioner practising below this level of competency may pose a risk to the public, therefore the Council recognises that many CM practitioners may seek to ensure they excel and maintain a higher level of competence. These competencies are closely aligned with, and should be read in conjunction with, the CM Scopes of Practice and the Guidelines for Cultural Safety and Cultural Competency for CM Education and Practice. The Council's accreditation standards require educational providers to design and implement a program where learning outcomes and assessment tasks map to all the competencies in this document as well as other relevant Council competencies and standards.

The Council recognises and seeks to give effect to Te Tiriti o Waitangi as the foundational governance document in Aotearoa New Zealand, and affirms the rights of iwi, hapū, and Māori in the shaping and governance of our nation. Te Tiriti o Waitangi also influences our roles and responsibilities as citizens in our community and shapes personal and professional conduct. The Council recognises its obligations under Te Tiriti o Waitangi and confirms its commitment to them. The Council also recognises and respects the historical and philosophical origins of CM.

In this document the term 'tangata whai ora' (which means 'a person/s seeking health') has been used instead of the term's patient/client/health consumer/service user. This is to encompass persons who may be engaging with CM in both a clinical and/or non-clinical setting.

Chinese medicine in New Zealand

Chinese medicine is a system of primary health care, encompassing a range of therapeutic interventions (or treatment modalities). CM practitioners provide an evidence-informed service, drawing on the CM framework to assess, improve, protect, and manage the physical and/or mental health and well-being of tangata whai ora.

Chinese medicine practitioners predominantly work in the private sector, including practising with other healthcare professionals in multidisciplinary centres. The nature of CM practice, and the way practitioners' work may change as health workforce roles evolve and new roles emerge.

Chinese medicine practice therefore is any role in which the practitioner uses their skills and knowledge as a CM practitioner and as such, practice is not restricted to the provision of direct clinical care. It also

includes using professional knowledge in a direct non-clinical relationship with the public, working in management, administration, education, research, advisory, regulatory or policy development roles and any other roles that have an impact on safe, effective delivery of CM. Therefore, the professional competencies in this document apply to all aspects of CM irrespective of setting, location, environment, field of practice, or workforce role.

Standards of clinical competence

The competence statements identify the minimum knowledge, skills, and professional attributes necessary for initial and continuing practise in New Zealand. They have been grouped into domains which identify elements of practice.

In practice, CM practitioners will demonstrate elements from several domains. Clinical competence requires an ability to draw on and integrate the breadth of these key elements. Further the integration of the key elements across the four domains will be demonstrated professionally in both clinical and non-clinical settings.

Domain 1: Safe, professional, and ethical practice

Domain 2: Communication and collaboration

Domain 3: Evidence-informed practice

Domain 4: Chinese medicine clinical practice

Each domain comprises a list of statements that identify the scope of competencies a CM practitioner must demonstrate for that domain.

Domain 1: Safe, professional, and ethical practice

This domain covers CM practitioners' responsibility to provide safe, professional, and ethical care, and to practise with professional autonomy and accountability within the current New Zealand medico-legal framework. It also addresses their responsibility for ensuring that the confidentiality and privacy of the tangata whai ora is always maintained.

A Chinese medicine practitioner will:

Demonstrate and give practical effect to all five principles of Te Tiriti; Tino rangatiratanga, Equity, Active protection, Options, and Partnership.
Practise within their registered scope/s and professional capability and meet the fitness to practise requirements (section 16 of the HPCA Act).
Understand and give practical effect to the duties and obligations of Chinese Medicine practitioners to uphold people's rights contained in the Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights ¹ .
Practise in an ethical and professional manner, consistent with relevant legislation and regulatory requirements, and the Council's Standard of ethical practice.
Ensure that all Chinese herbal application is in accordance with NZ legislation and CITES regulations (e.g., some products derived from animals are regulated by the Ministry for Primary Industries, or under the Animal Products Act 1999.)
Work within the limits of their own professional expertise and competence, including the utilisation of restricted activities under the Act, and be accountable for ensuring that all health services they provide are consistent with their education and skill level.
Demonstrate adherence to Council guidelines on cultural safety and cultural competency.
Apply pertinent quality frameworks and processes to practice. Quality frameworks may include (but are not limited to) workplace specific frameworks including standards and guidance set by the Council; Ministry of Health; Standards New Zealand; the Health Quality and Safety Commission; and the Accident Compensation Corporation (ACC).
Demonstrate compliance with legislation and guidelines relating to data privacy, and the storage, retention and destruction of clinical records and health information.
Provide accurate, factual, and appropriate information to insurers, including ACC, and other third parties.
Recognise and uphold the health-care rights of tangata whai ora, and prioritise their needs, rights, and interests, including their physical, emotional, and cultural safety.

¹ [The Code and Your Rights - Health and Disability Commissioner \(hdc.org.nz\)](http://hdc.org.nz)

Recognise, respect, and uphold boundaries in professional and therapeutic relationships.

Identify, assess, manage, and report on risks, treatment injury, near misses and their consequences, adverse events, and relevant contributing factors.

Reflect on practice and recognise limits and situations that are outside their scope of expertise or competence, take appropriate and timely action, including managing risks and onward referral as necessary.

Take an active role in protecting their own well-being through implementing self-care strategies, particularly during times of stress and fatigue.

Maintain currency in first aid certification relevant to safety in clinical practice.

Domain 2: Communication and collaboration

This domain covers Chinese medicine practitioners' responsibility to communicate clearly, effectively, empathetically, and appropriately with tangata whai ora and their whānau and families to provide culturally safe, high-quality, person-centred care. CM practitioners also communicate and collaborate with diverse groups within and outside of the wider health care system (including but not limited to individuals, family/whanau, groups, employees, volunteers, organisations, communities, and populations) effectively and respectfully to enhance relationships, interprofessional and intersectoral practice, and pursue common goals.

A Chinese medicine practitioner will:

Demonstrate effective communication which enables CM practitioners to adapt to situations and contexts within clinical and non-clinical settings ² .
Engage in culturally appropriate, safe, empathetic, and sensitive communication that facilitates trust and the building of respectful relationships within clinical and non-clinical settings.
Demonstrate the ability to obtain, and maintain informed consent, explaining the purpose, risks, and benefits of the proposed assessment and/or treatment as well as alternative options.
Communicate and work with tangata whai ora to support self-determination of care (Code of Health and Disability Services Consumers' Rights 1996).
Establish rapport with tangata whai ora to gain understanding of their issues and perspectives and respond appropriately to queries.
Convey knowledge and information in ways that engender trust and confidence, and respects the confidentiality, privacy, and dignity of tangata whai ora.
Competently communicate CM assessment findings, and outcomes, and record decisions through keeping comprehensive and accurate clinical notes, that are in accordance with the Council's Policy on Clinical record keeping (section 16 (b) of the HPCA Act).
Evaluate and apply partnership with tangata whai ora to ensure their goals and concerns are identified and integrated into the clinical analysis and treatment plan.
Make provisions, if necessary, to engage third parties, including whānau, family and/or interpreters, to facilitate effective communication with tangata whai ora.

² Effective communication covers everything from informed consent, active listening, written notes, appropriate communications with other service providers etc. Effective communication also includes the use of appropriate language and detail, use of appropriate verbal and non-verbal cues and confirming that the tangata whai ora has understood.

Establish and maintain purposeful, respectful, and collaborative person-centred working relationships across the health sectors that are instrumental to care, relevant to dealing with advocacy and facilitation of care with our individual tangata whai ora.

Work as part of a person-centered interprofessional team that keeps the interests of tangata whai ora at the centre of the care process and recognises barriers to, and facilitates pathways for, efficient transfer of care, when relevant.

Domain 3: Evidence-informed, reflective practice, and lifetime learning

This domain covers CM practitioners' responsibility to engage in evidence-informed practice and to critically monitor their own actions through a range of reflective processes. It also addresses their responsibility for identifying, planning, and implementing their ongoing professional learning and development needs. An evidence-informed approach to practice can be defined as the integration of research evidence, alongside practitioner expertise and clinical experience, and the experience of the tangata whai ora who are using the health care service. This type of approach allows for innovation and adaptation based on factors and context at individual, organisational, and service levels, while reducing inherent biases².

A Chinese medicine practitioner will:

Apply the principles of evidence-informed practice by using current clinical evidence, clinical experience, and primary literature (including Chinese medical classics), while respecting the preferences and choice of care of the tangata whai ora.
Evaluate, critically reflect on practice, and maintain professional standards and competence, through appropriate ongoing approaches to clinical competence.
Understand the principles and applications of scientific enquiry, including the evaluation of treatment efficacy, effectiveness, and the research process.
Plan and implement steps to address professional learning and development needs for all registered scopes of practice and maintain records of involvement in both formal and informal professional learning and development activities.
Demonstrate inclusivity and respect when engaging in the mentoring, teaching, and/or development of others.
Recognise opportunities to contribute to the development of new knowledge through research and enquiry.

Domain 4: Chinese Medicine clinical practice

This domain covers profession-specific knowledge, skills, and competencies required for practice as a registered CM practitioner.

A Chinese medicine practitioner will:

Demonstrate an understanding of the theories, principles, and clinical application of CM in the diagnosis, design of treatments, and management of a range of tangata whai ora and health conditions, specific to all their registered scopes of practice.
Demonstrate the ability to diagnose and differentiate musculo-skeletal conditions using western medical examinations and techniques to the level appropriate of a registered health professional.
Demonstrate the prescribed level of knowledge and competence in each of their registered fields/scopes of practice.
Engage in relevant, sufficient, and appropriate continuing professional development (CPD) opportunities, to maintain and improve current knowledge base and competence in each of their registered fields/scopes of practice.
Apply knowledge and understanding, specific to their registered scopes of practice, of the theoretical concepts and principles relevant to CM practice in health promotion, with facilitation of prevention and self-management strategies to enhance the health and well-being of tangata whai ora.
Demonstrate knowledge, specific to all their registered scopes of practice, and application of the historical foundations, theories, and philosophies of Chinese medicine as the cornerstone of clinical practice.
Integrate knowledge of pathology, anatomy, physiology, and other core biomedical sciences including physical examinations, imaging and laboratory testing relevant to human health and function, encompassing cardiorespiratory, musculoskeletal, neurological, and other body systems, within the context of CM, specific to all their registered scopes of practice, and the needs of tangata whai ora.
Demonstrate applied knowledge of the indications and contraindications of using specific CM interventions specific to all their registered scopes of practice.
Plan and implement competent, culturally responsive, and person-centred CM assessments and treatments.
Utilise specific and relevant outcome measures to evaluate treatment responses, using reflective processes to implement change.

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