

APPENDIX “N”: Acceptable Evidence

It is the duty of a registrant, when requested by the college or Inquiry Committee to verify statements and claims made in their marketing materials

The College of Chiropractors of British Columbia (CCBC) recognizes that chiropractic care may offer relief for persons experiencing neuro-musculoskeletal symptoms. Chiropractors must not make statements or claims that create an unjustified expectation of the potential benefit of chiropractic treatment and care.

Under section 85 of the College Bylaws, registrants must not engage in marketing that is false, inaccurate, unverifiable, misleading or misrepresentative of the effectiveness or a technique, procedure, instrument or device. Both specific claims and the overall impression of marketing must be considered. Marketing violates section 85 if it is likely to create unjustified expectations for treatment in the mind of patients or the public.

In addition to more traditional advertisements and printed materials, marketing also includes the use of websites, email newsletters, social media, promotional activities and public appearances. Chiropractors are strongly encouraged to regularly review their marketing to ensure compliance with section 85 of the Bylaws and Part 14 of the College’s Professional Conduct Handbook.

What is acceptable evidence?

Adopted from the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency

Chiropractors must not advertise health benefits of their services when there is not acceptable evidence that these benefits can be achieved.

When assessing whether there is acceptable evidence for therapeutic claims, the issues to consider include:

- Is the evidence relied on objective and based on accepted principles of good research? Is the evidence from a reputable source? For example a properly peer-reviewed journal.
- Do the studies used provide clear evidence for the therapeutic claims made or are they one of a number of possible explanations for treatment outcomes?
- Have the results of the study been replicated? Results consistent across multiple studies, replicated on independent populations, are more likely to be sound.
- Has the evidence been contradicted by more objective, higher quality studies? (For example, evidence from a single study would not be acceptable evidence if it is contradicted by a systematic review) Statements and claims in marketing that are contrary to higher-level evidence are not acceptable.

The following types of studies may not be considered sufficient acceptable evidence for advertising claims:

- Studies involving no human subjects;
- before and after studies with little or no control or reference group (eg. case studies);
- self-assessment studies;
- anecdotal evidence based on observations in practice; and,
- outcome studies or audits, unless bias or other factors that may influence the results are carefully controlled.

The evidence base for clinical practice is constantly developing so it is important that chiropractors make sure that any scientific information they rely on is current.

Chiropractors must take care to not mislead or create false impressions when using scientific information in marketing. Scientific information in marketing must be presented in a manner that is accurate, balanced and not misleading and using wording that will be readily understood by the intended recipients. The source of the information must be accurately cited.