Code of Practice and Ethics

home study course
Code of Practice and ethics

1. The Client/Therapist Relationship

- Great care must be taken to maintain an appropriate professional relationship.

- Clients may misinterpret inappropriate friendship, touching or dress. To allow the client to feel ‘safe’ with you and to avoid such misunderstanding a proper professional distance must be maintained.

- You should not blur the boundaries between client and friend by deliberately meeting clients socially. If such a personal relationship develops you should ask them to find another therapist.

- Modesty towels must be used as appropriate to the treatment undertaken and no unnecessary disrobing of the client should take place.

- You must not allow your views about client’s sex, age, colour, race, disability, sexuality, social or economic status, lifestyle, culture or religious beliefs to affect how you treat them or the advice you give.

- Therapists should not discriminate against clients on the grounds of race, religion, and political or personal beliefs and should treat all clients or potential clients with respect.

- However, you have the right to choose whom you treat. For example, a female therapist may only wish to treat women. This is permissible under Section 35 Subsection 2 of the Sex Discrimination Act 1975, for treatments where physical contact is involved.

- You should make sure that you comply with the terms of the disability discrimination legislation and ensure disabled access to your treatments wherever practicable providing treatment is within the limits of your competency.
2. Relationship with other therapists

- You should act with respect for other practitioners.

- You should work in a spirit of co-operation with other therapists. Any commercial competition between Members and Associates should be conducted in a fair and open manner. You should not attempt to entice clients away or openly criticise another therapist to clients.

- If you are employed by another therapist and leave that employment you may not seek to entice existing clients away from your previous employer.

- Great care should be taken in recommending a client to another therapist. Although you will be handing responsibility over to the new therapist for any treatments, which may follow, it must be borne in mind that in the event of any legal action between the client and new therapist you may still be considered legally responsible.

3. Relationships with medically qualified professionals

- You should not be claiming to ‘cure’ clients of medical ailments or to diagnose diseases.

- You should endeavour to foster good relations with those working in orthodox medicine. You should never countermand instructions given by a doctor.

- You should always ascertain at the consultation stage whether the client has any medical conditions likely to be affected by the treatment to be given. If this happens you should not carry out any treatment until you have the consent of the client’s doctor. Such consent can be by the client receiving verbal or written consent from their doctor. The client should then sign their client record that they have received such consent. Alternatively you can write to the doctor (with the client’s approval) directly giving full information on the treatment to be carried out and your competence to do so and requesting a response.
4. Confidentiality

- The therapist/client relationship is based on one of trust. You must treat all information about your clients as confidential. You must only use such information for the purposes for which it was given.

- You should not discuss any details regarding your clients with any other persons except with the express permission of the client, e.g. if they are moving to another therapist. The only exception to this rule would be in circumstances where there would be a serious risk to the health and safety of you or others not to do so, or where it would be in the public interest. In such circumstance you should reveal such relevant information only to the proper authorities, i.e. police, doctor, court of law.

5. Limits of competence

- A therapist must only carry out treatments and give advice within their area of competence, i.e. have received the proper training and be duly qualified to perform the treatment.

- You should also inform your clients and seek their consent before introducing new treatments into their existing treatment programme.

- A full consultation should be undertaken before each treatment to ensure that the most appropriate treatment is being given to the client and that no new contra-indications have occurred between treatments.

- If you have cause for concern regarding the health of your client you must advise them to see their GP to seek a diagnosis and medical advice.

- You have the right to refuse to treat a client if you do not feel competent to do so, for example if they are suffering from mental health problems, an addiction or are suicidal, etc. In such circumstances you should suggest that they contact their GP for further help and referral.
6. Consent

- Before each treatment begins you must ensure that the client has given their consent. Treating someone without consent may be legally classed as an assault.

- Consent must be ‘informed’ i.e. you must explain to the client what is involved in the treatment, its purpose and what to expect afterwards before they can consent.

- The treatment choice remains with the client, but you have the right to refuse the treatment if in your judgement it is inappropriate.

- Consent is a continuous process and not a one-off event. You should make sure that your client is happy to continue treatment by checking with them during the treatment itself as well as at the beginning alone.

- Some clients because of their age, illness or mental capacity may not be able to give consent to treatment. In these circumstances you must obtain clear consent from a person that you are satisfied is authorised to give consent on behalf of the client. This may in some circumstances be a team of health professionals.

- Therapists must follow the direction given in Section 10 “Children” of this Code.

- GP’s or Doctor’s consent should always be sought before treating a client who is contra-indicated for treatment. Likewise there may be some treatments for which a doctor’s consent is always necessary and you may have to check the restrictions of your treatment liability insurance policy for specific requirements.
7. Record Keeping

- It is essential to keep full and accurate records of all clients and all treatments carried out. Be aware that in the case of a dispute you may have to rely on these records in court to justify your actions.

- These should be held for a minimum of 10 years, but in cases where there are causes for concern they should be kept indefinitely.

- Client records should be updated at every visit. If paper records are kept the client should counter-sign the changes made.

- You must comply with Data Protection legislation. If you keep client records on computer you must register with the Office of the Information Commissioner (www.dataprotection.gov.uk).

- All records must be kept securely. Paper records must be kept under lock and key and computer records should be password-protected.

- A full consultation must be carried out before each treatment and full records kept and stored securely.

- This is an area where there can be conflict for therapists who are self employed but rent a chair or room within another business. Before you begin such an arrangement a legally binding document should be signed by both parties making absolutely clear who has access to your records and to whom they belong in the event of the arrangement ceasing.

- Records should also contain details of after-care advice given and any relevant comments made by the client regarding the treatment.

- No disclosure of any records should be made to any third party without the written permission of the client except in exceptional circumstance as outlined in the “Confidentiality” section, Item 4 above.
8. Hygiene

- All therapists are expected to abide by good standards of practice in relation to hygiene.

- Special care must be taken to ensure that cross-contamination and cross-infection do not occur. Specific treatment guidelines for hygiene are given within the specialist areas of section ‘B’ of this Code. However, all individuals should have a clear understanding of the necessity for general cleansing, disinfecting and sterilisation within their chosen therapy field.

- It is not considered appropriate for a therapist to have pets or animals within or passing through the treatment room. This is particularly important for individuals who work from home, for reasons of hygiene and potential allergy of clients. Exceptions may be made for clients with guide dogs or ‘hearing dogs’, however appropriate rigorous cleaning routines should be followed after animals have left.

9. Appearance and Personal Behaviour

- You should act at all times in a manner that is a credit to your profession.

- You must maintain a professional appearance at all times. You should follow advice on dress as taught during your training. For beauty therapists this will be white overalls and tights if female, for a personal trainer this might be a tracksuit, etc. Appropriate adaptation may of course be made for religious restrictions on dress.

- Jewellery is not appropriate for a professional appearance and health and safety reasons.

- Excessive exposure of flesh is also inappropriate and may give clients the wrong signals.
10. Children

- Some therapies are inappropriate for use with children. Others may be applicable, but therapists who offer such treatments should make sure that they have knowledge of the relevant requirements of the Children’s Act 1989, the Protection of Children Act 1999 and other pertinent legislation and apply it to their work.

- Children under the age of 16 should not be treated without written parental permission or permission of legal guardians. If a child client produces written permission, he or she must also include his/her own signature on the document, confirming that it is true.

- If the child is treated in the context of a Care Home or other institution, the written agreement of the Care Team should be sought.

- A parent, guardian or a suitable chaperone should be present during the treatment.

11. Animals

- It is illegal to treat animals with any therapy without the express permission of a veterinary surgeon.

12. Health and Safety

- You have a responsibility to ensure the safety of your clients and staff. You should be familiar with all current national health and safety regulations and local by-laws regarding your practice and implement them accordingly. Where you are uncertain you should seek clarification from your local environmental health office.

- You must comply with the COSHH regulations as they apply to your work and dispose of all waste appropriately.

13. Treating Clients in Pregnancy and Childbirth

- You may not attend a woman in childbirth or treat her 10 days after birth without permission from a doctor or midwife. (Unless it is an emergency delivery.)

- You should exercise the greatest caution in treating a pregnant client particularly during the first trimester and if there is any history of miscarriage or medical complications during pregnancy. Therapists should have received specialist training in this field before they become involved in an area in which they are not competent, as the repercussions could be very serious.
14. First Aid

- You should carry with you or have on your premises a first-aid kit that complies with the Health & Safety (First Aid) Regulations 1981.

- Where possible you or one of your staff should hold a First Aid qualification relevant to the size of your business.

- You must record any accidents or incidents and follow the requirements of the RIDDOR legislation.

15. Advertising

- All advertising should follow the guidelines of the British Code of Advertising Practice of being legal, decent, honest and truthful.

- You must not make exaggerated claims of your abilities or the curative properties of the treatments you offer.

16. Insurance

- You should make sure that you hold the appropriate insurance cover for your business practice.

- All therapists should either take out cover for Third Party Liability (including Treatment Liability) with a FSA approved insurance provider. Most Underwriters would not encourage you to display an insurance cover certificate in case this encourages claims, however if a client asks for details you should provide them with the name and contact details of your insurance provider.

- If you are employed rather than self-employed you should make sure that your employer holds the appropriate cover for you.