

Telehealth guidelines for osteopaths

These guidelines have been developed by the OCNZ to provide guidance to osteopaths in delivering care using telehealth. These guidelines should be read in conjunction with the OCNZ Telehealth Standards, however these guidelines serve to provide more specific guidance on aspects of care that must be considered when carrying out a consultation via telehealth.

Telehealth comprises the delivery of health services that involve technology. This includes

- Phone consultations
- Email consultations
- Video conferencing
- Digital photography and video
- Text communication
- Instant messaging

Appropriateness of telehealth

Practitioners need to use their clinical judgement to decide if a telehealth consultation is clinically appropriate. Consider:

- Availability of appropriate devices and Wi-Fi/ internet access
- Digital ability and literacy of the service user
- Constraints which may impede likelihood of success (e.g., financial or situational barriers)
- Consent and support of person/whānau to receive care this way
- Risk factors of providing the service in a non-face to face manner

Jurisdiction

The Health Practitioners Competence Assurance Act 2003 applies to the delivery of health services to New Zealanders. Practitioners delivering osteopathic services via telehealth should be registered with OCNZ and hold a current practising certificate.

Practitioners providing telehealth are required to comply with the [Privacy Act](#) (including the [Health Information Privacy Code](#)), and the [Code of Health and Disability Services Consumer Rights](#).

The [OCNZ Code of Ethics](#) and [Capabilities for Osteopathic Practice](#) and [Capabilities of Paediatric Practice](#) also apply to all forms of telehealth provision.

Consent

Informed consent must be obtained prior to consultation using telehealth. Practitioners should refer to the [OCNZ Guidelines for Informed Consent](#).

Consent processes include:

- **Accepting Telehealth**
 - Documented consent to receive a health service via telehealth. In cases of emergency, verbal consent must be obtained and documented. Obtaining informed consent for Telehealth includes the same considerations as face to face contact.



- **Consent to content**
 - Where it is usual to obtain written consent for any photos, video or audio recordings, this is still required and needs to be stored as part of the health record. This consent needs to be obtained before each recording or photo/s. Otherwise, verbal consent may be obtained and documented.
- **Sharing information**
 - Consent for sharing of information with third parties, including what information may be shared
 - Disclosure of how patient data is stored, including what information third party providers hold
- **Use of technology**
 - The preferred platform, including instructions for use and troubleshooting arrangements
 - Requirements for the health service user (e.g., smartphone, data requirements, ideal physical environment)
 - Costs to the health service user and what payment arrangements will be used
 - Available alternatives, if required
- **Privacy**
 - Privacy rights of the health service user, including access to information held about the patient
- **Professional relationship**
 - The health service user should be provided with information regarding the complaint process.
 - Identity confirmation should occur at the beginning of any interaction, including who else is in the room or party to the interaction. Care needs to be taken when discussing confidential information when it cannot be ascertained who else is listening/watching.
- **ACC**

Please note that, if a telehealth consultation is approved for funding under an ACC contract, the following questions must also be covered as part of the consent process:

 1. Do you declare that you have provided true and correct information and you'll tell ACC if your situation changes?
 2. Do you authorise me as your (name of health profession: GP, physiotherapist, etc) to lodge your claim with ACC?
 3. Do you authorise your records to be collected or disclosed to ACC to help determine cover for your claim, determine what you'll be entitled to, or for research purposes (such as injury prevention, or assessment, and rehabilitation)?

Choice of technology

Consider:

- What information is required prior to or during the consultation to provide safe care, e.g. is written, verbal and/or visual information required?
- The communication and health literacy needs of the health service user
- Cultural practices. Consider the role of face to face interaction in developing rapport and connection with whānau as a whole
- Internet access and speed/bandwidth
- Available devices for use

Refer to <https://www.telehealth.org.nz/regulations-and-policies/regulations-and-standards/> for detailed technical advice to guide choices of platform.



Privacy

The same requirements apply for the protection of personal information obtained via telehealth as to all other service user information.

Ensure:

- Digital documentation, records and access to platforms are all protected with secure passwords
- Arrangements for secure backing up of data are in place
- Processes and policies for the protection of personal information are in place, including arrangements for managing and reporting breaches or incidents

Documentation

All interactions via telehealth must be documented as per face to face contact activity in clinical records. Practitioners should refer to the [OCNZ Guidelines for Clinical Record Keeping](#).

- Verbal and written consents need to be documented in clinical notes as and when obtained
- Text messages and emails should not be paraphrased but be downloaded or replicated and stored in clinical records
- Video and photographs should be stored in an accessible format and form a part of the clinical record

Professional boundaries

It is essential to separate work and personal communication. Practitioners should refer to [OCNZ Social media guidelines](#).

- Do not use personal social media accounts for healthcare provision
- Use work mobile phone numbers and email addresses to create accounts

Risk management

Appropriate policies and processes must be in place to ensure that concerns that arise during a telehealth consultation are escalated and managed appropriately.

Contracts and insurance

Practitioners may be subject to telehealth policies and requirements from their respective employers and should ensure that they are familiar and compliant with these.

Practitioners should check with their indemnity insurance provider about cover for telehealth services.

Sources of further information

[NZ Telehealth Forum and Resource Centre](#)

[OCNZ Telehealth standard](#)

[Allied Health Best Practice Guide for Telehealth](#)

www.privacy.org.nz

