



Irish Society of
Homeopaths

Setting and maintaining standards for homeopathic practice in Ireland

Code of Ethics and Practice

March 2016

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Introduction

The Irish Society of Homeopaths (ISH) stated aim is to set and maintain standards for homeopathic practice in Ireland.

It is the function of the Society to give guidance to the profession generally on all matters relating to ethical conduct and behaviour and to inform the public seeking homeopathic treatment.

The aim of the Code of Ethics and Practice is to encourage integrity and responsibility in the practice of homeopathy, with truthfulness and dignity at all times in relation to their dealings with patients and colleagues. This Code applies to all Members of the ISH, including student clinical members.

A homeopath has, by becoming a member of the ISH, agreed to observe and be bound by and observe the Code of Ethics and Practice, to abide by the regulations of the Society and to secure and maintain professional indemnity insurance in respect of their professional practice.

This Code will form the basis upon which the conduct of any members will be assessed in the event of a complaint, although it cannot be regarded as exhaustive.

Homeopaths should recognise that good professional boundaries and clear communication are the basis of an effective patient/practitioner relationship. It is misunderstandings in this relationship that form the basis of a significant number of complaints.

The ISH encourages, where possible, the resolution of differences between members and potential complainants through informal mediation via the Professional Conduct Officer before entering into the formal written complaint procedure. It is the nature of professional practice that many decisions fall into areas where there is no absolute right and wrong and where a series of conflicting obligations may have to be considered. The Code offers sound guidance on these issues and indicates areas where particular challenges may arise. When in doubt, members are encouraged to seek advice from the Irish Society of Homeopaths and/or any other appropriate professional bodies.

It is the responsibility of every member of the Irish Society of Homeopaths to be familiar with the content of this Code and to be able to explain its requirements satisfactorily to their patients.

Throughout this Code references to specific legislation or laws shall include every modification, consolidation, and re-enactment, and extension of them for the time being in force. Where written, the singular also includes the plural.

Section 1 - Guiding Principles for Practice

- 1 These principles are for guidance and are not intended to be exhaustive. They encourage integrity and responsibility in the practice of homeopathy, the needs of the patient and the development of understanding among homeopaths. All members are expected to:
 - 1.1 Put the individual needs of the patient first
 - 1.2 Respect the privacy and dignity of patients
 - 1.3 Treat everyone fairly, respectfully, sensitively and appropriately without discrimination
 - 1.4 Work to foster and maintain the trust of individual patients and the public
 - 1.5 Listen actively and respect the individual patient's views and their right to personal choice
 - 1.6 Communicate clearly the role of homeopathy in their treatment of the patient
 - 1.7 Be very clear, if using other therapies, that the other therapy is not homeopathy
 - 1.8 Encourage patients to take responsibility for their own health, through discussion and provision of information
 - 1.9 Provide comprehensive clear and balanced information to allow patients to make informed choices
 - 1.10 Ensure that consent is given by the patient, or their authorised representative, for any prescribed treatment
 - 1.11 Respect and protect patient confidentiality
 - 1.12 Comprehensively record any history the patient may give and the advice and treatment that the member has provided
 - 1.13 Disclose confidential information only in clearly defined circumstances
 - 1.14 Maintain and develop professional knowledge and skills
 - 1.15 Practise only within the boundaries of their own competence
 - 1.16 Respond promptly and constructively to concerns, criticisms and complaints
 - 1.17 Respect the skills of other health care professionals and where possible work in co-operation with them
 - 1.18 Never disparage or speak disrespectfully of fellow Homeopaths, either in public or to patients
 - 1.19 Comply with current legislation of the country.
 - 1.20 Practice in accordance with this code and any other codes or documents as agreed by the committee of the ISH
 - 1.21 Advise the Professional Conduct Officer if a situation arises that may result in a complaint being made against them

Section 2 - Professional obligations

Obligations to the Patient

2.1 Clarity of Contract

- 2.1.1 From the outset, patients should be given full and clear information about the practitioner's services. This should include information about clinic times and contact availability and the appropriate charges. This should be included on any information websites or other directories
- 2.1.2 The first communication with the patient should include an explanation on how the Homeopath operates and the nature of the treatment. The patient should be kept updated throughout their treatment period
- 2.1.3 A Homeopath shall not exaggerate or underrate the gravity of a patient's condition, nor make any promises as to the results of the treatment, to the patient or anyone else

2.2 Consent

- 2.2.1 To ensure that the patient, or their authorised representative, is able to give informed consent with regard to healthcare, members must give clear and sufficient information about the nature of homeopathic treatment before treatment begins and as appropriate during treatment

2.3 Consent in Children and Young People

- 2.3.1 Before examining or treating a child the practitioner should ensure that he or she has valid consent
- 2.3.2 Consent for treating children should comply with the Homeopath's Insurance Company requirements
- 2.3.3 Any examination of a child under 16 should not be undertaken other than in the presence of a parent, or patient's representative, and with the child's consent

2.4 Remedy Prescription Information

- 2.4.1 Clear instructions for taking the medication must be given to the patient for each prescription made
- 2.4.2 The patient has the right to know, and the homeopath is obliged to offer, the name of any prescribed remedies
- 2.4.3 Where a patient expressly requests not to know the name of the remedy, the homeopath should respect their wish and record it in their notes

2.5 Patients on Prescribed Medication

- 2.5.1 Be aware that the responsibility for adjusting medication prescribed by a GP or other medical professional lies with the patient and prescriber of that medication

2.6 Other Therapies

- 2.6.1** Where members offer other complementary therapies, they must inform the patient prior to treatment about the other therapy and indicate their relevant qualifications, registration with the relevant registering body and adherence to a separate Code of Conduct. They should be very clear that this therapy is not Homeopathy.
- 2.6.2** They must receive permission from the patient to perform this other treatment on the patient and record such consent in the patient notes

2.7 Locum Arrangements

- 2.7.1** Registered Homeopaths are responsible for making clear arrangements for patient care if they are absent from their usual practice hours for a period exceeding 24 hours
- 2.7.2** If a locum is used then the Principal Homeopath is responsible for ensuring that they are suitably qualified and insured
- 2.7.3** The deputising Homeopath should be cognisant that they represent the principal Homeopath. Accordingly treatment details should be provided promptly to the principal Homeopath on their return

2.8 Referrals

- 2.8.1** The patient can only be referred to another practitioner with the patient's consent. The practitioner should ensure that to the best of their knowledge, the practitioner to whom they refer is fully qualified and insured to practice
- 2.8.2** Patients may refer themselves, in which case the homeopath should discuss with their patients the importance of informing their GP and other healthcare professionals, if appropriate
- 2.8.3** Where patients have been referred by a GP, the GP retains overall clinical responsibility for that patient
- 2.8.4** Patients may be referred by another homeopath or health care practitioner. Case details of such referrals shall be recorded in writing in the case notes
- 2.8.5** If at any time the patient declines to give consent for the member to make contact with their GP, or other healthcare practitioner, their wishes are to be respected and recorded in the notes
- 2.8.6** Continuity of care is important. If a new patient has received treatment within the last six months from another homeopath, the patient's permission should be sought to contact the previous homeopath to obtain details of that treatment. If the patient does not agree to this, a note of their refusal should be recorded in the notes and the patient should be made aware that this might adversely affect the continuity of their care
- 2.8.7** A Homeopath should not solicit patients known to be under the care of a fellow Homeopath.

2.9 Contact with relatives/other interested parties

2.9.1 Where a member of a patient's family or a friend or other person connected with a patient initiates contact with the member, it is the responsibility of the member to listen carefully to and record their concerns without breaching confidentiality or contradicting the wishes of the patient. No instructions in relation to treatment should be taken on behalf of a patient, unless that person has power of attorney

2.10 Hospital Treatment

2.10.1 Where a patient requests homeopathic treatment to be initiated or continued within a clinical setting, for example, in a hospital or hospice, the member informs the patient or their representative of the need to notify the person with overall clinical responsibility

2.11 Patient Records - Confidentiality and Obligations of Disclosure

2.11.1 Members must ensure that patient information is kept secure and confidential unless the patient agrees to the release of personal information in writing or where there is a legal requirement to release information

2.11.2 All patient notes, whether handwritten or on a computer, must be clear, legible, current, kept up-to-date and contain all the relevant information relating to the progress of the case. This is important for patient care and essential should the member or student clinical member at any time be involved in complaints or legal proceedings. All notes should be contemporaneous or completed promptly after a consultation (generally on the same day)

2.11.3 Under the Data Protections Acts, 1988 and 2003, a patient has the right to access their patient notes. This includes any handwritten notes or any information held on computer relating to the patient (e.g. typed-up notes, repertorisation charts, video recording, etc.). Any application should be made in writing by the patient (this can be an email). An access fee of no more than €6.35 may be charged, if you wish

2.11.4 In response to an access request you must:

- a) supply the information to the individual promptly and within 40 days of receiving the request
- b) provide the information in a form which will be clear to the ordinary person, e.g. any codes must be explained
- c) All third party information (e.g. names of other people) should be redacted (i.e. blackened out)
- d) If the patient requires a copy of their patient record to be sent to another homeopath or practitioner, they should be copied and dispatched in a timely fashion, subject to receipt of written consent from the patient confirming the wish to pass the record to another clinician. The full original record should be retained as required in 2.11.2 above

- 2.11.5 Where a practitioner is compelled by a court order or other legal authority to provide information on a patient, confidentiality must be maintained at all times - only the information required under the order should be released
- 2.11.6 In the unusual situation, where it is necessary to provide information on a patient in the interest of public safety or the safety of the patient themselves, the duty to society overrides duty to the patient. This will usually happen when a patient puts themselves or others at serious risk
- 2.11.7 A member must be accurate and factual when writing reports, completing or signing forms or certificates, or if required to give evidence in court or at a tribunal

2.12 Inappropriate use of patient related materials

- 2.12.1 Members must obtain written permission for recording (other than written notes) of any part of the consultation. They should avoid recording through any other means such as, but not limited to, on electronic file, video or through digital techniques, any visual or auditory material concerning a patient which might be regarded as explicit, indecent or pornographic
- 2.12.2 Registered Homeopaths will only use a patient's records (whether written notes, film, tape recordings, or any visual or auditory material in digital or analog format) concerning a patient **only** with that patient's clear, informed, written consent to the precise use of the material. The patient will be given explicit information as to the purpose the material is to be used for. Permission may be revoked at any time. The patient should not feel pressured to give consent. If the member wishes to use the material for a different purpose than the one given, a supplementary permission must be obtained

Professional Obligations

2.13 Insurance

- 2.13.1 Practicing members shall have appropriate professional indemnity insurance cover at all times
- 2.13.2 Insurance cover should include provision of treatment for 'Under 16's'

2.14 Competence

- 2.14.1 Homeopaths who do not have full conventional medical training are not qualified to make a medical diagnosis
- 2.14.2 Members will be aware of the limits of their professional competence and where appropriate will refer to other practitioners or health care professionals where:
- a) The case is beyond their clinical competence
 - b) Where a patient would benefit from another form of treatment
 - c) The patient exhibits symptoms that suggests an underlying condition which requires further investigation and medical diagnosis

2.15 Continuing Professional Development

- 2.15.1 Members are expected to regularly monitor and evaluate their clinical skills and actively extend their knowledge base and their own personal development through continuing professional development (CPD)
- 2.15.2 Evidence of continuing professional development will be taken into account when hearing allegations regarding a member's professional conduct or competence

2.16 Professional boundaries

- 2.16.1 A homeopath should not abuse professional boundaries, whether sexual or otherwise. It is never appropriate for a member to pursue or enter into an intimate relationship with a patient, spouse/partner of patient, student or supervisee. Such a relationship undermines the relationship of trust. Members should ensure that a professional relationship is maintained at all times
- 2.16.2 Where a member needs support to manage a potentially difficult situation of this nature, guidance should be sought from supervision or from the Professional Conduct Officer of the ISH

2.17 When trust is compromised

- 2.17.1 Where, for whatever reason, the necessary relationship of mutual trust breaks down, either the Homeopath or the patient may terminate the professional relationship
- 2.17.2 If this happens the member needs to ensure that the patient has an alternative source of homeopathic care if they want it
- 2.17.3 With the patient's permission, the new practitioner should be provided with sufficient information to take over responsibility for the patient's care without delay

2.18 Problems with health / Fitness to Practice

- 2.18.1 If the mental, emotional or physical health of a member is impaired for any reason, and patients may be put at risk, the member must seek and follow professional advice on whether, and how, to modify their practice so as to safeguard the interests of their patients
- 2.18.2 It may be necessary to stop practising or to receive professional supervision in order to establish fitness to practise. The member should inform the Registrar, in confidence, if this is the case
- 2.18.3 If a member has any concerns about another member's mental, emotional or physical health they should seek appropriate advice from the Professional Conduct Officer of the ISH
- 2.18.4 In the event of the retirement, illness or death of a Registered Homeopath, arrangements must be made to ensure that patients are notified and their notes are, with their consent, passed to any successor practitioner
- 2.18.5 The Registrar should be notified immediately if you are being investigated (e.g. if a claim has been made against you and your practice by a patient or member of the public)

2.19 Research

- 2.19.1** Members intending to undertake research must be familiar with and abide by current research ethics requirements, research governance and all relevant statutory obligations
- 2.19.2 For any homeopathic proving, provers will be entitled to the same level of care and supervision as patients
- 2.19.3 Never administer any substance for the purpose of carrying out a Homeopathic proving unless the person to whom it is to be administered fully understands the nature of the proving and provides written consent

2.20 Complaints

- 2.20.1** Homeopaths trained to meet the ISH standards and who follow the guidance in this Code are able to practise homeopathy safely, competently and ethically
- 2.20.2 The ISH encourages, where possible, the resolution of differences between Registered Homeopaths and potential complainants through informal mediation via the Professional Conduct Officer. However if, for whatever reason, their competence to practise is brought into doubt and the matter cannot be resolved by informal mediation, the matter should be referred in writing to the ISH via the Professional Conduct Officer
- 2.20.3 Patients, members of the public, other professionals and those registered with the Irish Society of Homeopaths have the right to complain to the Professional Conduct Officer of the ISH if they perceive that a member has not treated them, or conducted themselves, in accordance with this Code
- 2.20.4 Members should ensure that a patient has clear information about how to express any concern they may have about their treatment. In handling any complaint directly, the member should act promptly and constructively, putting the interests of the patient first, and co-operating fully with any external investigation
- 2.20.5 Any patient bringing an apparent failure in care, as described within this Code, to the member's attention, is entitled to proper investigation and an explanation of what has occurred. The member will take the initiative in putting things right and, where appropriate, offer a suitable apology and assurance that steps have been taken to prevent reoccurrence
- 2.20.6 Members are encouraged at an early stage to ensure that any steps taken with regard to a complaint are in conjunction with the Society's Mediation and Disciplinary Processes
- 2.20.7 The procedures and powers of the ISH provide a mechanism for patients, members of the public, other professionals, or members of the ISH, to raise

allegations of professional misconduct and for the member involved to have the right to respond to any such allegations

- 2.20.8 Where the conduct of any member may have an adverse impact on their reputation as a homeopath and or the reputation of homeopathy such matters may be brought to the attention of the Professional Conduct Officer for their consideration
- 2.20.9 It may also be necessary in certain circumstances, including but not limited to criminal or other legal proceedings being implemented, to suspend or remove a registrant from the register

Section 3 - Legal obligations

3.1 Criminal and civil law

- 3.1.1 Members are required to comply with the criminal and relevant civil law of the country, state or territory where they are practising
- 3.1.2 Members must observe and keep up to date with all legislation and regulations relating directly or indirectly to the practice of homeopathy
- 3.1.3 References to any legislation or regulations throughout this code shall include any amendments or other alterations, repeals or replacements made in law since the date they came into force. Any reference to the singular shall include the plural and references to the feminine shall include the masculine.

3.2 Data Protection

- 3.2.1 Members are obliged to comply with the provision of the Data Protection Acts, 1988 and 2003
- 3.2.2 Personal details can include any information held on computer relating to the patient, handwritten notes, text messages, photographs, video recordings of their image or recordings of their voice
- 3.2.3 In order to comply with the Data Protection Acts, full and clear records of all treatments of patients shall be taken. This should include dates, remedy prescriptions, treatment analysis, etc
- 3.2.4 Patients have rights of access to their health records and, where requested, should be supplied to them within 40 days of receiving the request and should be in a form that will be clear to the ordinary person, i.e. any codes must be explained.

3.3 Situation of Suspected Abuse

- 3.3.1 Members should make themselves familiar with Children First: National Guidance for the Protection and Welfare of Children 2011 from the Department of Children and Youth Affairs:

www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/Publications/ChildrenFirst.pdf

www.dcy.gov.ie/documents/children_first/ChildrenFirstRIAMAY2014.pdf

- 3.3.2 The member is required, when there is evidence of a child or other vulnerable person of being at risk of any abuse, to contact your local HSC Children and Family Services for advice (Appendix 2 of Children First)

3.4 Advertising and Media

- 3.4.1 Members should ensure that they do not allow misleading advertising and information about their practice. Advertising should be 'legal, decent, honest and truthful' as defined by the Advertising Standards Authority for Ireland

- 3.4.2 Professional advertising and marketing communications:

- a) Must be factual and not seek to mislead or deceive or make unrealistic or extravagant claims
- b) May indicate special interests but must not make claims of superiority or disparage professional colleagues or other professionals
- c) Make no promise of cure, either implicit or explicit, of any named disease
- d) All research should be presented clearly honestly and without distortion; all speculative theories will be stated as such and clearly distinguished

- 3.4.3. Advertising content and the way it is distributed must not put prospective patients under pressure to consult or seek treatment from a member

3.5 Potential misrepresentation

- 3.5.1 The use of the title 'Doctor' should be avoided, when the use of that title may create a false impression that the individual concerned is a registered medical practitioner

- 3.5.2 Reference to assistants as 'Nurse' is not acceptable unless the individual concerned is registered with the Irish Nurses and Midwives Organisation (INMO)

- 3.5.3 Claims, whether explicit or implied, orally or in writing, implying cure of any named disease must be avoided.

3.6 Treatment of animals

- 3.6.1 Members should be aware of and observe the law with regard to the treatment of animals

- 3.6.2 Only members with a veterinary qualification may treat animals in a professional capacity

Declaration:

I agree to be bound by the Irish Society of Homeopath's Code of Ethics and Practice.

Signed: _____

Date: _____