

Use of the Title "Doctor"

GUIDELINES

RESTRICTION OF THE TITLE "DOCTOR"

The **Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991** contains a restriction on the use of the title "doctor". Under the Act five regulated professions are authorized to use the title: chiropractors, dentists, optometrists, physicians and psychologists.

Members of the College of Chiropractors are prevented from using the title "doctor" in the course of providing, or offering to provide health care by section 33 of the **Regulated Health Professions Act, 1991** states:

1. Except as allowed in the regulations under this Act, no person shall use the title "doctor", a variation or abbreviation or equivalent in another language in the course of providing or offering to provide, in Ontario, health care to individuals.
2. Subsection (1) does not apply to a person who is a member of,
 - a. the College of Chiropractors of Ontario;
 - b. the College of Optometrists of Ontario;
 - c. the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario;
 4. the College of Psychologists of Ontario; or
 5. the Royal College of Dental Surgeons of Ontario.

The aim of the legislation is to ensure that the public are not confused when seeking primary health care practitioners.

INTERPRETATION

The restriction of the title "doctor" applies to members while they are in the course of providing or offering to provide, in Ontario, health care to individuals. The restriction does not apply to non-clinical contexts such as social or purely academic settings.

"No person" means no person except those listed in subsection 33(2) above.

"shall use the title "doctor", a variation or abbreviation or equivalent in another language" means 'Dr', 'docteur' or the equivalent in any other language. Abbreviations include the abbreviation of a variation.

"in the course of providing health care" means at any time the scope of practice is being performed including:

- Actual treatment.
- When a patient is in the practice site for whatever reason.
- When chiropractic/podiatry advice is being given.



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- At any time you are representing yourself as a chiropodist or podiatrist to patients.
- In any form of advertisement or promotion.
- In any instruction material you provide.

"or offering to provide health care" includes:

- Telephone listings.
- Presentations to the public (speeches, lectures etc.).
- Interviews, newspaper articles.
- Referral and consultation letters to other health professionals.
- Stationery, business cards which will be viewed by patients or potential patients.
- Whenever you are representing yourself as a chiropodist or podiatrist to potential patients.
- Any form of advertising or promotion.
- Any instruction material.

"to individuals" means patients, potential patients or any member of the public regarding chiropody or podiatry care.

MEMBER'S RESPONSIBILITY

Members of the College are responsible for ensuring that, within the context of providing or offering to provide health care, they comply with the above guidelines. It is prudent to avoid use of the title "Doctor" in any context, from marketing to administration, to eliminate any chance of being perceived as operating outside of the legislation in this regard.

In addition, members are responsible for making sure that their staff do not refer to them as "doctor" in their communication with individuals.

QUESTIONS AND ANSWERS

- Q. When addressing my podiatrist colleagues outside the hospital/clinic, may I address them as "doctor"?**
- A.** Yes. You may use the title "doctor" in strictly social settings where there are no potential patients present.
- Q. Can I spell out my DPM degree as "Doctor of Podiatric Medicine" degree in advertisements?**
- A.** Yes. In this context you are using the term as a qualification rather than a title. You must, however, use the title "Podiatrist" in the advertisement as that is the title under which you are registered to practise.
- Q. Many of my patients call me 'doctor', should I correct them?**
- A.** Yes. You should clarify the matter for them. You may find it useful to post a simple explanation in your waiting room to help your patients understand your requirements regarding the use of this term.

