



Office of Hon Judith Collins

Minister of Justice
Minister Responsible for the Law Commission
Minister for ACC
Minister for Ethnic Affairs

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Mark Hanna
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Dear Mr Hanna

Thank you for your email of 29 May 2014, regarding ACC funding for acupuncture, osteopathy and chiropractic treatment.

In deciding what treatments are funded by ACC a number of factors need to be taken into account including the views of the client on what they believe is the best treatment for them, the advice and clinical experience of health professionals who have referred their patients for treatments and the evidence on the effectiveness of the treatment.

Under ACC's legislation, acupuncturists, chiropractors and osteopaths are defined as treatment providers. If a client has an injury that is covered by ACC, they are able to visit an osteopath or chiropractor to lodge a claim, but not an acupuncturist. Before an ACC client is able to receive ACC funded acupuncture they would need to have a claim accepted and then be referred for acupuncture by a health professional such as a physiotherapist or their GP.

Osteopaths and chiropractors are a regulated profession and are required to be registered with the Osteopathic Council of New Zealand and the Chiropractic Board respectively. Acupuncturists must also be members of either the New Zealand Register of Acupuncturists (NZRA) or New Zealand Acupuncture Standards Authority (NZASA) at the time of delivering ACC funded treatment. These organisations are responsible for ensuring the providers are appropriately qualified, reviewing and promoting the competence of their members and setting standards of clinical competence, cultural competence and ethical conduct to be observed by health practitioners.

While the cost of these services is increasing people choosing these therapies still only represent a small fraction of the total cost of ACC treatments. For example the total cost of acupuncture treatments is only around 1.5 per cent of ACC's spend on treatment costs in 2012/13 year.

With regard to your concerns about evidence on the effectiveness of these types of treatment, ACC conducts evidence-based reviews of health technologies in order to inform health service purchasing and, where possible, uses evidence reported by other sources such as the Cochrane Library and the National Institute for Health and Excellence (NICE).

Chiropractic, osteopathy and acupuncture are all professions that encompass a number of interventions believed to make a difference in the treatment of injury. Chiropractic, like osteopathy, is a health profession, and not a single treatment. Most research into techniques used in osteopathy tends to focus on general 'manual therapy' techniques such as spinal mobilisation and manipulation. Manipulation and mobilisation can be performed by chiropractors and osteopaths as well as doctors and physiotherapists as part of the treatment given to patients. Reviews of evidence by ACC and external organisations, such as the Cochrane Library, indicate that acupuncture, osteopathy and chiropractic treatments provide some medical benefits to patients. For example, acupuncture was effective in some instances for reducing pain, improving mobility and reducing fatigue; and certain manual manipulation techniques from osteopaths and chiropractors can be effective for lower back pain.

In 2011, ACC's research team also conducted a literature review of the efficacy of acupuncture in the management of musculoskeletal pain. It found the most convincing evidence for the effectiveness of acupuncture related to the treatment of chronic neck pain and the improvement of pain and mobility in chronic shoulder pain. Evidence on the effectiveness of acupuncture is not dissimilar to other physical therapies such as physiotherapy, chiropractic and osteopathy.

ACC plans to continue funding chiropractic, osteopathic and acupuncture treatments as there is a demand for the treatment, there is evidence that the treatments can be effective, and because there are appropriately qualified healthcare professionals providing the treatments. ACC have advised me they have no plans to review the acupuncture treatment profiles in the near future.

Thank you again for writing.

Yours sincerely



Hon Judith Collins
Minister for ACC