



Case-Base Discussion – 21st February 2023 (Ref 287)

Case - Communication and Consent

Today's CBD focused on the area of communication and consent, specifically what to do when a patient comes in saying something along the lines of, "I just need my L3 putting back." How much should we be influenced by the patient's request and, if we refuse to be 'manipulated' by the patient, how should we go about communicating this? You could argue that the patient does know what's best for them but as one of our listeners pointed out, what might have worked for a patient at one stage of their life, may no longer be applicable at the current time, for example due to ageing, operations, or a new medical diagnosis. Looking at this from a different perspective, it is often helpful to ask a new patient, who has seen another practitioner, what has worked for them in the past.

Suggestions for handling the situation varied from explaining to the patient that we look at the body holistically, rather than just manipulating the problem area, with a view to preventing re-occurrence of the problem, rather than just providing symptomatic relief; explaining that your approach may be slightly different but still effective; or deciding to carry out the patient's wishes if safe to do so but within the framework of your treatment plan. Good communication is crucial, as ever, gaining confidence of the patient to consider alternative techniques or modalities as appropriate. And, of course, if the patient does not give their consent, this has to be respected.

Linking this case with Osteopathic Practice Standards Themes

A - Communication and patient partnership

A1 Poor communication is at the root of most patient complaints. Effective communication is a two-way exchange, which involves not just talking but also listening with care.

A2 You should be alert to patients' unspoken signals; for example, when a patient's body language or tone of voice indicates that they may be uneasy, experiencing discomfort, or anxious and vulnerable.

A3 Patients will come to you with different experiences and expectations. You should try to accommodate their wishes as much as you can without compromising the care you can provide.

A4 Be aware that patients will have particular needs or values in relation to gender, ethnicity, culture, religion, belief, sexual orientation, lifestyle, age, social status, language, physical and mental health and disability. You must be able to respond respectfully and appropriately to these needs.

B - Knowledge, skills and performance

B1 You must have and be able to apply sufficient and appropriate knowledge and skills to support your work as an osteopath.

B2 You must recognise and work within the limits of your training and competence.

B3 You must keep your professional knowledge and skills up to date.

B4 You must be able to analyse and reflect upon information related to your practice in order to enhance patient care.

Linking this case with the Chiropractic Code

Principle A – Put the health interests of the patient first.

A1 Show respect, compassion, care by listening/acknowledging views decisions.

A2 Respect patients' privacy, dignity and cultural differences and their rights prescribed by law.

A3 Take appropriate action if you have concerns about the safety of a patient.

A4 Treat patients fairly and without discrimination and recognise diversity and individual choice.

Principle C – Provide a good standard of clinical care and practice.

C4 Use the results of your clinical assessment of the patient to arrive at a working diagnosis or rationale for care which you must document. You must keep the patient fully informed.

C5 Develop, apply and document a plan of care in full agreement with the patient.

C6 Select and apply appropriate evidence-based care which meets the preferences of the patient at that time.

Principle E – Obtain informed consent for all aspects of patient care.

E1 Share with the patient accurate, relevant and clear information to enable the patient to make informed decisions about their health needs and relevant care options.

Principle F – Communicate properly and effectively with patients, colleagues and other healthcare professionals.

F1 Explore care options, risks and benefits with patients, encouraging them to ask questions.

Principle G – Maintain, develop and work within your professional knowledge and skills.

G1 Keep your knowledge and skills up to date, taking part in relevant and regular learning and professional development activities that aim to maintain and develop your competence and improve your performance and the quality of your work.