

Consultation on amendments to the standards of proficiency for chiropodists and podiatrists

Introduction

We are consulting on proposals that the standards of proficiency for chiropodists and podiatrists relating to prescription only medicines and local anaesthetics should no longer be optional.

The Prescription Only Medicines (Human Use) Order 1997 is a piece of legislation under the Medicines Act 1968 which establishes classes of medicines and specifies appropriate practitioners for sale, administration and supply.

Chiropodists and podiatrists who are appropriately qualified and who have their names annotated on our Register are able to administer certain local anaesthetics and supply certain prescription only medicines.

Standards of proficiency

The standards of proficiency are threshold competence standards for the safe and effective practice of each of the professions we regulate. Their primary role is as standards for entry to the Register. They describe the minimum skills and knowledge necessary to become registered.

We visit education providers to ensure that they meet our standards of education and training and that their programmes allow their students to meet the standards of proficiency. Once a programme is approved, someone successfully completing that programme is eligible to apply for registration.

There are two standards in section 2b.4 which relate to the local anaesthetics and prescription only medicines entitlements:

- administer relevant prescription only medicines, interpret any relevant pharmacological history and recognise potential consequences for patient treatment (this standard applies **only** to registrants who are eligible to have their names annotated on the Register)
- apply local anaesthesia techniques (this standard applies **only** to registrants who are eligible to have their names annotated on the Register)

The existing standards are currently optional. This means that someone applying to us under the international route can be registered even if they do not have the necessary qualifications or experience in these areas. It also means that it is possible we could approve a pre-registration UK education and training programme which did not include these components.

Background and rationale

During the recent review of the standards of proficiency, the issue of the optional status of these standards was raised. In particular, it was argued that as grandparenting has now closed for chiropodists and podiatrists, and because all pre-registration education programmes now include both the local anaesthetic and prescription only medicines entitlements, it was no longer necessary for the standards to be optional. It was argued that these components were now an essential part of safe and effective practice.

Our Education and Training Committee and Council recently discussed the issue of approval of courses in local anaesthetics and prescription only medicines. We decided that as local anaesthetics and prescription only medicines are now an integral part of the practise of chiropody and podiatry, and all pre-registration programmes include these subjects, it would be appropriate at this stage to seek the views of stakeholders on proposals that the standards should become compulsory.

Existing registrants

A small but significant number of chiropodists and podiatrists are registered without either the prescription only medicines or local anaesthetics entitlements. This is because they became registered prior to these entitlements becoming a standard part of pre-registration education and training; because they registered under the grandparenting route to registration which closed on 9 July 2005; or they registered via the international route.

If the standards were to become compulsory, this group of registrants **would not** be affected. All registrants are required to meet those standards which apply to their scope of practice.

We approve a small number of programmes which allow registrants who do not have these entitlements to gain them.

International applicants

Applications from chiropody and podiatry applicants who have qualified outside of the UK are assessed by two registration assessors from their profession against the standards of proficiency. The assessors make a recommendation about whether the applicant has met the standards, including whether they should be registered with both entitlements, one of them or neither.

From July 2003 to March 2007, 165 applicants were registered as chiropodists and podiatrists via the international route.

- 14 were registered with both entitlements.
- 112 were registered with the local anaesthetics entitlement only.
- No applicants were registered with the prescription only medicines entitlement only.
- 39 applicants were registered without either entitlement.

The consequence of removing the 'optional' part of the standards would be that only international applicants who met both of the standards could be registered.

UK approved programmes

If the standards' optional status was removed, we could only approve pre-registration education and training programmes which included both entitlements.

All currently approved pre-registration chiropody and podiatry programmes include both entitlements.

Your comments

We would welcome your views about the proposed changes.

This consultation will put our proposals before a wide range of stakeholders including professional bodies, higher education institutions and others with an interest in our work. The consultation will run until **Friday 7 March 2008**.

If you would like to respond to this consultation, please send this response to:

Standard of proficiency consultation – chiropodists and podiatrists
Policy and Standards department
Health Professions Council
Park House
184 Kennington Park Road
London
SE11 4BU

Email: consultation@hpc-uk.org

Website: www.hpc-uk.org/aboutus/consultations

We will publish on our website a summary of the responses we receive, and the decisions we have taken as a result.

If you would prefer your response not be made public, please indicate this when you respond.

We look forward to receiving your comments.

Yours faithfully

Eileen Thornton
Chair of the Education and Training Committee