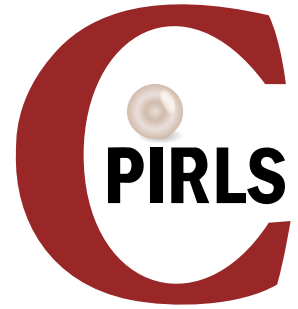


# Safer Practice Notice



Monitoring and analysing chiropractic patient safety incident reports enables the CPiRLS Team to provide advice that can assist in ensuring improved standards of chiropractic patient safety. This Safer Practice Notice is a fast-track advice notice for all chiropractors.

## Reducing risks associated with discontinuity of patient care

Notice issued: June 2022



### Risk:

Discontinuity of care may be associated with an increased risk of adverse events.

### Evidence:

Within healthcare, continuity of care, i.e. the extent to which a patient experiences an ongoing relationship with their healthcare practitioner/s, has a well-established association with patient outcomes, including satisfaction<sup>1</sup> and avoiding patients harm<sup>2</sup>. A review of the CPiRLS database (2009-2019) identified a theme of discontinuity of care. Most cases involved the patient seeing an external locum or a different chiropractor within the same clinic. Post-treatment distress or pain were the most common outcomes. Contributing factors reported included the practitioner being unfamiliar with the patient's case, and patients feeling uncomfortable with a different practitioner.

### Recommended actions:

- Ensure all relevant clinical information is clearly documented and is provided (with the patient's consent) when making referrals to another chiropractor or healthcare professional<sup>3</sup>.
- When acting in a locum capacity, ensure familiarity with the full details of a patient's case prior to starting care.
- Effectively communicate with patients to establish their preferences and expectations for the care to be provided.
- Be proactive in modifying or ceasing aspects of care if the patient is uncomfortable with receiving treatment from a different chiropractor.
- Although discontinuity of care cannot be completely avoided, measures may be possible to reduce its occurrence to avoid a potential impact on patient outcomes, including a risk of patient safety incidents.

### References:

1. Van Walraven C et al (2010). The association between continuity of care and outcomes: a systematic and critical review. *J Eval Clin Pract* 16(5):947-956
2. Avery AJ et al (2021). Incidence, nature and causes of avoidable significant harm in primary care in England: retrospective case note review. *BMJ quality & safety* 30(12):961-976
3. General Chiropractic Council (2016, amended 2019) The Code: Standard of conduct, performance and ethics for chiropractors. <https://www.gcc-uk.org/i-am-a-chiropractor/guidance/the-code> (Accessed 30 May 2022)

### Recommended reading:

Guthrie B et al (2008). Continuity of care matters. *BMJ* 337

### Further information:

To read reported cases, and for further information about chiropractic patient safety incident reporting, visit <https://www.cpirls.org>.