

Advertising Advice

It is important that you remain vigilant and do not give ammunition to critics of our profession. We recommend that you exercise caution if advertising the benefits of “condition” based care. The use of the term subluxation is acceptable as long as you do not link it to the cause of disease.

Be mindful that criticism of the profession may not be limited to advertising alone. It is also important to ensure that your staff are properly briefed and do not make claims either over the telephone or to patients that cannot be supported by acceptable evidence.

The ASA CAP accepts that chiropractors may claim to treat the following conditions:

- Joint pains including hip and knee pain from osteoarthritis as an adjunct to core OA treatments and exercise.
- Chiropractors may also refer to general aches and pains including those of joints, muscle spasms and cramp
- General, acute and chronic backache, back pain (not arising from injury or accident), including Lumbago
- Uncomplicated mechanical neck pain (as opposed to neck pain following injury e.g. whiplash)
- Headache arising from the neck (i.e. cervicogenic)
- Shoulder or elbow pain, or tennis elbow arising from associated musculoskeletal conditions of the back and neck, but not isolated occurrences
- Prevention of migraine
- Tension and inability to relax (through lifestyle advice rather than chiropractic care)
- Sciatica – however please note that claims to the intensity of sciatica cannot be made
- Sports injuries – to avoid misleading consumers when referencing “sports injuries” you must make it clear which specific problems that can arise from sports injury you can treat successfully.
- Pregnancy, Children and Babies – it is acceptable for you to post-graduate qualifications and training in your marketing communications. You may state that patients may benefit from an increase in both relaxation and wellbeing.

The ASA currently do not support the advertising of the following conditions:

- Rheumatoid pain, rheumatism and neuralgia
- Whiplash
- Birth trauma
- Colic
- Fibromyalgia
- Peripheral joint/ muscle/ nerve complaints e.g. repetitive strain injury

This list is not exhaustive.

You must also bear in mind, the GCC Code of Practice B3 (page 13) relating to Publicising your work or practice:

use only legal and verifiable information when publicising yourself as a chiropractor, advertising your work and/or your practice including on your website. The information must be honest and comply with all advertising codes and standards.

Please also refer to the GCC’s “Guidance on Advertising” (<https://www.gcc-uk.org/good-practice/guidance/>) which also has links to ASA.

The Guidance does not have to be followed however you must have good reasons for not doing so.

A complaint regarding advertising should be sent to the GCC, who will review it and take appropriate action. This may result in them forwarding the complaint onto the ASA if it is not within their remit.

Use of Testimonials

You are advised to only use patient testimonials on your website and advertising that are within the acceptable conditions. If a patient writes a genuine testimonial about you on an independent site then there is no problem with this as long as you do not then try to market this testimonial in any marketing or advertising communication.

Use of Patient Photographs

You must have patient consent for use of any photographs in or outside the practice.

Facebook/Twitter

If a patient wanted to make a comment about you on facebook or a blog site and it was genuine then there is no problem with this. However, you may open to a complaint if you are seen to endorse this comment and then perhaps incorporate this in your advertising or website by re-using or re-tweeting these comments.

Editorials

Genuine Editorials are outside the remit of the ASA and CAP codes due to Freedom of Speech. However, if you plan to use editorials on your website we recommended that you have a separate section entitled News Stories/Press Releases. It must be very clear that any articles are genuine editorials which show publication, date, issue etc

Use of the Dr Title

The ASA has upheld complaints against advertisements for chiropractors that have misleadingly implied that the advertiser is a medical practitioner; you should note that references in the ad to "DC" or "doctor of chiropractic" are unlikely to dispel that misleading impression. If you are going to use the Dr title then the ASA advise that you refer to yourself as Mike Smith, Doctor of Chiropractic and **NOT Dr Mike Smith, chiropractor**

Advertisers wanting to refer to themselves as "Dr", "Doctor" or similar, should take care not to imply that they hold a general medical qualification if they do not. The need for clarity is greatest when marketers are making health-related claims and the ASA has taken a tough line on marketers making unqualified reference to the 'Dr' title in the context of health.

CAP understands that the GCC permits its members to use the "Dr" title provided the copy makes clear it is a courtesy title only and does not otherwise imply that they hold a general medical qualification (unless they hold a dual registration with General Medical Council (GMC)). The ASA has yet to rule on this matter, however CAP considers that if a title is clearly and prominently qualified with additional text which makes clear it is a courtesy title and that the practitioner does not hold a general medical qualification, references to titles of "Dr" or "Doctor of Chiropractic" may be acceptable.

Whilst we find this very frustrating and acknowledge that many chiropractors have a broader scope of practice than the conditions accepted by the ASA and GCC, members who do not comply with this advice may be vulnerable to a complaint from members of the public, the ASA or the GCC.

Unfortunately the UCA is unable to offer a website checking service but strongly advise that you contact the ASA who have a CAP copy team that offer a FREE service, where they will review your advertising material.

They can be contacted on Tel: 020 7492 2100 Email: advice@cap.org.uk