

COVID 19 - Update 2

March 25, 2020

Dear Practitioners,

We will continue to provide updates over the coming weeks as we respond to practitioners' questions and provide information and links to key information coming from central agencies.

- **Practising Certificate payment options:** We have developed 3 options to help practitioners pay for their practising certificate. The information can be accessed [here](#).
- **Practising as an occupational therapist during the COVID-19 crisis:** It is almost impossible to give specific advice to a profession which is diverse in its scope and areas of practice. Specific advice that may be given to a hand therapist or a contractor with ACC would be different to a therapist in an acute setting or working in a mental health service. Our general advice is that you use the competencies, code of ethics and other guidance already available on the Board and MoH websites to aid your clinical and ethical decision making. Work in collaboration with other health and social care colleagues to make team based decisions, which are in the best interest of the individual staff members and the people/whānau who are receiving the service. Practitioners will have to make judgements using their experience, their employer requirements, colleagues and the infra-structures they work in to guide them. Such judgements would occur at any time BUT at this time there needs to be heightened awareness and adherence to using personal protective equipment, coughing etiquette and universal precautions to prevent transmission of infection. These are not new elements of practice they apply in certain situations and more so now. As registered health practitioners, occupational therapists are expected to provide essential healthcare if this is required, and how this can be safely provided needs to be planned with your immediate work team, service and organisation.
- **Special Purposes Scope of Practice – Responding to COVID-19:** OTBNZ is in the process of gazetting a special purpose scope. This scope will allow practitioners who do not hold a current practising certificate to apply and work as an occupational therapist. It has been developed to address workforce issues.
- **ACC advice on use telehealth:** ACC have produced information on the use of telehealth for occupational therapists and hand therapists. The information can be accessed [here](#).
- **Webinar:** Andrew Charnock, CE and Registrar at the Board, and Mary Silcock, Professional Advisor, will host a webinar on Monday 30 March at 10.30 am. It will cover advice about practising as an occupational therapist during the level 4 restrictions on movement and provision of services. The legislative framework which the OTBNZ will be applying under a situation of national emergency will be discussed. How OTBNZ intends to operate during the period of lockdown to support the profession and the health service will also be presented. Advice from the OTBNZ perspective to help with ethical and clinical decision making will be provided. Please email specific questions beforehand to mary@otboard.org.nz and we can make sure we address these. Please register [here](#) for the webinar.

- **Media Release:** The Ministry of Health is moving to increase the capacity of the health workforce to deliver essential health services and are seeking expressions of interest from health and care professionals who are able and willing to work for a limited amount of time as part of the national strategic approach to managing COVID-19. Please read the release [here](#).
- **Providing an essential service:** The advice about essential services is being updated very frequently. Please check the original websites for the latest information. At this stage occupational therapy is considered an essential if it is required to provide the services outlined at Aotearoa New Zealand Government [Covid19 website](#) and [Ministry of Social Development](#).

Kia Kaha,



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