

COVID 19 - Update 1

March 24, 2020

Dear Practitioners,

As we navigate through these unprecedented times, the Board will continue to update you as soon as we receive notifications and guidance from the Ministry of Health that impact occupational therapists.

We have closed the office as requested by the government and have activated our business continuity plan. Our staff are working remotely. During this time, we encourage you to email us on enquiries@otboard.org.nz rather than telephone us. We aim to function as usual however there may be some delays. We will do our absolute best and ask for your understanding and patience at this time.

- Board and other OTBNZ meetings will be occurring via teleconference
- The OTBNZ is in discussions about the impact on student placements with the Occupational Therapy education providers

Joint Statement with OTNZ-WNA: Please find our statement [here](#)

OTBNZ Practice Advice working during level 4 lockdown period commencing 25 March 2020

- The [Ministry of Health COVID 19](#) website is updated daily and is providing ongoing advice for health professionals, carers and the public about managing their health and wellbeing. Refer to this advice as the primary source of information.
- We have combined a [list of resources](#) that may help inform decision making

Scope of practice of Occupational therapy

- As registered health professionals, occupational therapists may be asked to undertake other activities as a part of the Government's COVID-19 plan
- In an emergency practitioners may act out of scope under section 8 of the HPCAA. This should occur under the guidance of a health practitioner who is working within their own scope of practice
- We are anticipating receiving further advice from MOH about actioning section 8 if required and will advise accordingly. See [MoH advisory page for health professionals](#) for further up to date advice

Practising certificate renewal

- Please ensure that you renew your practising certificate by 31 March so you can continue practising. This may be essential to support the health service managing COVID 19.
- Practitioners who apply for a practising certificate after 31 March must not practise until a new practising certificate has been issued. Check all communication sent by OTBNZ to you.
- We have some practitioners who have made an application but not completed all the requirements. This may hold up the issuing of your practising

certificate. Please check your status in your myOTBNZ account and ensure that your application is complete

Telehealth

If at all possible, establish and set up a system for telehealth, telephone and/or email communication. Telehealth is a critical way that providers can reduce risk while maintaining close relationships with their patients.

- MoH has advised to prioritise household- and health care-associated close contacts and high-risk contacts (immunocompromised and those with co-morbidities) for contact tracing. Maintaining communication with people in these categories is essential to support them managing their high risk status.
- The [NZ telehealth resource centre](#) has advice about how to implement tele-care for people during the COVID-19 response. Dr. Fi Graham is providing Zoom training/sharing in telehealth delivery on Wed 25th March from 12-1pm for occupational therapists. Here's the [link](#)

Community based visits

When it is absolutely essential to visit at home or an accommodation provider consider the following:

- There is evidence that human-to-human risk of transmission of coronaviruses is increased in hospital and aged care settings so extreme care is required
- Consult with your line management and adhere to infection control policies of your organisation before visiting
- Plan how you will carry out these policies before completing the visit. Consider:
 1. Transporting equipment and infection control procedures
 2. Vehicle use and infection control
 3. Protecting your own whanau from infection
 4. Documenting who was present at the visit to assist with contact tracing
 5. Transportation and disposal of personal protective equipment
- Personal Protective Equipment can be obtained from the DHB. This needs to be arranged by employers/organisations/providers for their staff
- Ensure all the Ministry of Health (MoH) use of personal protective equipment [guidelines](#) are followed
- Immediately implement infection control procedures/protocols if contact with a suspected case occurs during a visit if respiratory related procedures like intubation, suctioning, bronchoscopy, tracheostomy, cardiopulmonary resuscitation are going to occur or do occur in your presence
- Information for [community based health workers](#) is updated regularly on MoH COVID 19 website
- Information for the [people at home](#) who you work with can be found on [MoH COVID 19](#) website

Home and community support workers cannot go to work if they:

- have cold or flu symptoms. Workers should be symptom-free for 48 hours before returning to work
- have been overseas in any country in the previous 14 days
- have been in close contact with a suspected, probable or confirmed case of COVID-19

Kia Kaha,



Andrew Charnock

Chief Executive and Registrar

Occupational Therapy Board of New Zealand

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