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# Policy – Telehealth Consultations

THE AUSTRALIAN REGISTER OF HOMOEOPATHS LIMITED  
A company limited by guarantee not having a share capital

ABN 69 088 314 818

## Preamble

The Australian Register of Homoeopaths (ARoH) is the self-governing peak body that sets professional standards for registered homoeopathic practitioners in Australia. ARoH ensures the safety, in as much as is practicable, of members of the public seeking homoeopathic services from ARoH registered homoeopathic practitioners.

ARoH's Code of Conduct Policy requires all registered homoeopathic practitioners to provide health services in a safe, ethical and competent manner. Face-to-face consultations are the preferred mode of practice for initial and subsequent consultations. With advances in technology, telehealth consultations are becoming more popular. ARoH recommends the first/initial consultation to be face to face.

Telehealth (audio-visual) is a new way of practice which offers greater accessibility and convenience. They also pose clinical and technological challenges to the homeopathic practitioner.

Homoeopathic practitioners should be aware that there may be differences in the behaviour and/or presentations between a client under face-to-face and telehealth consultations. In addition, the ability to undertake and obtain results of a physical examination will be limited. Telehealth consultations requires more active listening than face-to-face consultations.

The expectations of homoeopathic practitioners undertaking telehealth consultations are outlined in this document.

## Definition

Telehealth consultations are a method of providing distant care for clients via audio (telephone) or audio visual (video conference) consultations. Audio visual consultations are preferable over audio/telephone consultations.

## Guidelines

1. Contact your Professional Indemnity and Public Liability insurer prior to undertaking telehealth consultations. Enquire about your policy cover and telehealth consultations. Abide by the Insurer's rulings on telehealth consultations.
2. Homoeopathic practitioners must adhere to the ARoH Code of Professional Conduct and Standards of Practice, at all times.
3. Homoeopathic practitioners must adhere to Territory, State and Federal law in their practice as well as the National Code of Conduct for Non-registered health practitioners, at all times.
4. Provide safe, competent and ethical health care
  - a. It is preferred that the initial consultation is face-to-face. However, if this is not possible, due to distance or legal reasons, then the first consultation should be undertaken as an audio-visual consultation, and not as an audio only consultation.
  - b. If you are not confident with the technology to undertake a telehealth consultation, please refer your client to an ARoH registered practitioner, who is confident in taking telehealth consultations.
  - c. Ensure you confirm the identification of the client at the beginning of the consultation. Check the client's date of birth by sighting an identification document such as a passport/driver license.
  - d. Ensure you obtain informed consent from the client or guardian (if client under 18 years of age or has a legal guardian) to conduct and obtain information via the

- telehealth method being undertaken. Obtain this in writing, as an email, prior to the consultation.
- e. Ensure all costs of the consultation, including any ancillary costs such as postage, are explained to the client prior to the consultation.
  - f. If the client has a guardian, establish that they can be present during the consultation
  - g. Do not allow any persons into your consulting room during the consultation process. You should ensure normal privacy requirements for health information are met.
  - h. Ensure your client has a closed room available for their consultation, to avoid being overheard.
  - i. Ensure you obtain consent if you are to record the consultation. Ensure this is undertaken prior to the telehealth consultation, and permission is received in writing, as an email. All recordings are to be stored and retained securely, for example in a secure hard drive location, and password protected, as per Territory or State legislation requirements.
  - j. If the client wishes to cease the consultation at any time, they should be allowed to do so. If this action will attract a charge, this must be identified to the client before you begin a telehealth consultation.
  - k. If you determine the presenting condition requires a physical examination before you can proceed further, offer a face-to-face consultation, or refer to another practitioner, such as a medical practitioner, to undertake this examination on your behalf. Obtain permission from the client for the other practitioner to share their results with you, and for you to discuss their case with them.
  - l. Adequate case notes (hard or soft copy) should be maintained. This is, in addition to, any audio-visual or audio recordings undertaken during the telehealth consultation.
  - m. Ensure that the following information is recorded in the case notes : type of consultation - audio-visual or audio only consultation; if a recording was made; informed consent was received; identification was received; any referrals advised; treatment plan; if there were any technical malfunctions that occurred during the consultation.
  - n. A written record of the treatment plan discussed with the patient is to be emailed to the client for clarification and to avoid any misunderstandings.
5. The homoeopathic practitioner is to ensure they have adequate technical ability to undertake a telehealth consultation, as well as the equipment that will support the technology.
- a. Ensure you have working computer, microphone and camera and reliable internet connectivity
  - b. There are multiple platforms for telemedicine, and it is recommended that you have access to more than one, to compensate for vagaries of one platform.
  - c. If the client is unsure of the technology or privacy issues, the homoeopathic practitioner must ensure that the client's questions are answered satisfactorily before proceeding with the consultation.
  - d. Diligent case taking, homeopathic diagnosis and treatment plan notes should be maintained to create an audit trail, if needed.

**CoVID - 19**

The CoVID-19 pandemic has called for flexible and adaptive measures to provide healthcare across all sectors.

Face to face consultations are no longer recommended, even for initial consultations, to reduce risk to patient and practitioner. Until this situation changes, homoeopathic practitioners must use telemedicine as their primary mode of practice delivery.