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The Institute of Trichologists

CODE OF PROFESSIONAL PRACTICE AND ETHICS

For Registered Trichologists

INTRODUCTION

Putting patient health interests first is the overriding principle for professionals and, as a result, promotes and encourages trust.

Our Code sets out patient expectations and the principles and standards Trichologists must follow, who therefore have a responsibility to know the provisions of the current rules. We have clear and transparent processes for investigating and taking appropriate action against concerns raised about IOT Trichologists who are alleged to be unfit to practise because of incompetent performance or unacceptable professional conduct. A serious failure to follow this Code may result in a Trichologist being removed from the register and being unable to practise as an IOT Trichologist. It is important to note that this Code should be interpreted by all in the spirit in which it is produced: where a minor or unintentional breach has taken place, this will not automatically involve or necessitate a Fitness to Practise investigation.

The Code outlines the standards of performance, conduct and ethics for registered IOT Trichologists and students in order to join and remain on the register. It is regularly reviewed to ensure that it continues to encompasses the highest standards for patient care. It has been drawn up by the IOT Board of Directors, and complies with the Articles of Association, and is referred to by the Registration Council when making decisions on sanctions or conditions.

WHO IS THE CODE FOR?

- Patients, for reassurance that they will receive a safe, high-quality standard of care.
- Trichologists, to reflect on and maintain their professionalism.
- Educators, to help students understand what it means to be a professional Trichologist.

OVERRIDING PRINCIPLES

1. Put the health interests of patients first.
2. Act with honesty and integrity and maintain the highest standards of professional and personal conduct.
3. Adhere to the conflicts of Interest policy.
4. Provide a good standard of clinical care and practice, including clinic environment and advertising standards.
5. Maintain a clear professional relationship with patients.
6. Obtain informed consent for all aspects of patient care.
7. Communicate effectively and properly with patients, colleagues and other healthcare professionals.
8. Maintain and develop your professional knowledge and skills.
9. Maintain and protect patient information, exercise etiquette when using IT and social media.

AS AN IOT REGISTERED TRICHOLOGIST, YOU MUST:

1. Put the health interests of patients first

1.1 Ensure your prime concern is for the welfare of the patient and the safety of the general public.

2. Act with honesty and integrity and maintain the highest standards of professional and personal conduct

2.1 Conduct yourself at all times with dignity and behave in an honourable manner with patients, the general public, other Trichologists and members and practitioners of other professional bodies.

2.2 Act at all times in a manner which promotes public trust in the your knowledge, ability and judgement, and enhances the good standing and reputation of the profession.

2.3 Be honest, uphold the honour and dignity of the profession, act with integrity and not engage in any activity which may bring the profession into disrepute.

2.4 Maintain exemplary standards of professional conduct. You must act within the law (within your practice or personal life). All practices within the UK must adhere to The Health & Safety at Work Act 1974. Those outside of the UK must adhere to the relevant Health and Safety Legislation for their country or location.

2.5 Refrain from corruptly offering or accepting any gift or inducement.

2.6 Not in any way induce or attempt to induce a patient to leave the care of a previous employer of yours.

2.7 Use IOT logos and post-nominal letters awarded to you solely for the use with your name, they cannot be used to credit a business, other practitioners or clinics generally. Websites belonging solely to you may display the logo and letters, however a website listing you as '*part of the team*' can only use the logo and letters when attached directly to your name.

3. Adhere to the conflicts of interest policy

3.1 Adhere to the following 'conflict of interests' policy. Potential or actual conflicts of interest must be disclosed. Disclosure must be made in writing to the Board of Directors. Failure to disclose or avoid a conflict of interest may result in:

a) removal from the IOT register,

b) legal action being taken wherever appropriate

c) withdrawal of the designated letters after your name.

It is not possible to define all situations or relationships which may create a conflict of interest, so each situation must be evaluated individually. Some of the more obvious conflicts may include:

a. Having any interest, dealings or shareholdings in any business which is a competitor, customer or supplier of the IOT, or is seeking to become one.

b. A close family member (including children, in-laws, partner or spouse) having any interest, dealings or shareholdings in any business which is a competitor, customer or supplier of the IOT, or is seeking to become one.

c. Having a close or longstanding relationship/friendship with a business which is a competitor, customer or supplier of the IOT or is seeking to become one.

d. Using confidential information obtained through your registration of the IOT for your own personal gain.

e. Using confidential information obtained through your registration of the IOT in order to set up a competitor.

f. Receiving a gift or payment from a company which is associated with the IOT.

g. Using your authority or position for personal gain.

h. Being, or giving the appearance of being, in a position which may result in an actual or perceived detriment to the IOT's reputation and/or interests.

3.2 Not engage in transactions on behalf of the IOT with organisations or individuals with which you have an interest. All decision making and transactions with the organisation concerned will be handled and managed independently.

4. Provide a good standard of clinical care and practice, including clinic environment and advertising standards

4.1 Ensure you have adequate personal malpractice insurance, negligence and third-party insurance; and provide a copy of your current insurance certificate with your annual registration. Failure to do so may result in temporary or permanent removal from the register.

4.2 Ensure your annual fees are paid within one month of the due date. Failure to do so may result in removal from the register and withdrawal of the designated letters.

4.3 Must immediately advise the IOT and their insurance company of any official enquiry into their practice from whatever source.

4.4 Conduct consultations on a face to face basis with a physical examination of the hair and scalp to facilitate a diagnosis. Consultations be between 45 minutes and 1 hour. No treatments, products or medications should be supplied to a patient or member of the public without a full consultation having taken place first. In some circumstances a video consultation may be permitted, this should follow the same format as a face-to-face consultation but will not allow in depth examination of the hair and scalp. It is possible to accurately diagnose some conditions without physical examinations; however certain conditions do require a hands-on examination to take place. A video diagnosis must be clear in its limitations and must not mislead the patient in any way. Video Consultations should last between 30 minutes and 45 minutes.

4.5 Comply with the Local Council Regulations and the advice of the Environmental Health Officers regarding adequate facilities, such as heating, lighting, ventilation, toilets, electrical installations, smoke alarms and fire extinguishers (within the UK). Outside of the UK, registrants must consult with and comply with advice and regulations as legislation determines in their country or location.

4.6 Arrange working conditions so as to protect the safety of the public and those people working on the premises. Registrants based in the UK must be aware of their responsibilities under Health and Safety Legislation, registrants outside the UK should adhere with the legislation that is relevant to Health and Safety at work in their country or location.

4.7 Provide an accessible, functional First Aid kit at all times in clinics. Reference should be made to the Shops and Offices Act of the country in which registrants' practice.

4.8 Conduct regular reviews of the facilities and working practices to ensure they comply with current standards. Registrants in the UK should be aware of their responsibilities under Health and Safety legislation, those based outside the UK must adhere to Law and Legislation relating to safe working practices for their country or location, this applies to employer, employee or self-employed.

4.9 Not use the title Doctor in your advertising (UK) unless entitled as a registered member with The General Medical Counsel. Registrants outside of the UK must only use the title Doctor in line with the legislation covering this term in their country or location. If the title of Doctor is used in other forms of advertising, then it must be stated clearly what the qualification refers to (e.g. PhD).

4.10 Ensure advertising does not mislead the general public in any way. All benefits and services offered, and products referred to must be supported by medical or scientific research. In accordance with the Cancer Act 1939, registrants must not advertise, or offer to treat, cure or prevent cancer, nor claim or imply that any treatment, product or service can do so.

4.11 Ensure advertisements do not claim or imply superiority over other professional services.

4.12 Not endorse or promote any products using their registered member status or the name of The Institute of Trichologists. You are able to offer expert consultancy to product development and may also comment on specific hair and scalp related questions and concerns in an educational and expert capacity.

4.13 Not claim cures to named conditions in compliance with the laws of the country where they practice.

4.14 Ensure that all advertisements and other public pronouncements with which you, or the name under which you practice, is associated are not such as would bring the Institute or the profession of Trichology into disrepute. Specifically, you shall adhere to accepted advertising practice and to any ruling by the Advertising Standards Authority.

4.15 Ensure that if you use your name in connection with advertisement or promotion, by or for any establishment or practice, that they adhere to the Code of Professional Practice and Ethics. In respect of any patient visiting or consulting that establishment or practice, notwithstanding that the patient may not have consulted or have been treated by you; and if any complaint from any such patient is received by the IOT, you will be responsible under the terms of the Code as if you had dealt personally with that patient.

5. Maintain a clear professional relationship with patients

5.1 Act in line with the professional "Duty of Candour". Accompanying guidance can be found here. Registered Trichologists must be open and honest with patients when something goes wrong with their treatment or care which causes, or has the potential to cause, harm or distress.

This means that you must:

- tell the patient (or, where appropriate, the patient's advocate, carer or family) when something has gone wrong;
- apologise to the patient (or, where appropriate, the patient's advocate, carer or family)
- offer an appropriate remedy or support to put matters right (if possible)
- explain fully to the patient (or, where appropriate, the patient's advocate, carer or family) the short and long-term effects of what has happened

Registered Trichologists must also be open and honest with their colleagues, employers and relevant organisations, and take part in reviews and investigations when requested. They must also be open and honest with their regulators, raising concerns where appropriate. They must support and encourage each other to be open and honest, and not stop someone from raising concerns.

5.2 Adhere to the 'Code of Professional Practice and Ethics on safeguarding responsibilities when treating children or vulnerable adults'. Accompanying guidance can be found here.

5.3 Not charge for 'courses' of clinical treatments in advance of seeing or treating a patient. You are entitled to charge a deposit or full fee for a single consultation or treatment.

6. Obtain informed consent for all aspects of patient care

6.1 Ensure digital Photographs used in patient diagnosis are securely stored in their records and are only taken with the patients' express permission.

6.2 Obtain and record consent from a patient prior to starting any treatment, check with the patient that they continue to give their consent to assessments and care.

6.3 Obtain and record the consent from the patient regarding the sharing of any information from their patient record.

6.4 Ensure the consent of a patient is voluntary and not under any form of pressure or undue influence.

7. Communicate effectively and properly with patients, colleagues and other healthcare professionals

7.1 Must endeavour to co-operate with professional colleagues and members of other health professions for the benefit of their patients and the public.

7.2 Not pass comment or judgement of another practitioners competence. If the patient has a complaint, they should be encouraged to complete the complaints process to allow an independent investigation to take place. You can write to another Trichologist to request patient notes, with the permission of the patient, if that patient has elected to change practitioner. Wherever possible, all practitioners should co-operate with information requests to safeguard the patient and members of the public.

7.3 Be aware of the limits of your competence and be ready to refer a patient to the medical profession or other health care professionals if it is in the patients' best interest. You shall maintain a readiness to consult professional colleagues when appropriate.

7.4 Must not disparage the professional services of other Trichologists or health care professionals, nor make claims of superiority, either expressed or implied.

8. Maintain and develop your professional knowledge and skills

8.1 In order to maintain professional competence, you must continually update your knowledge through professional journals, meetings and participation in Continuing Professional Development (CPD) and educational programmes recognised by the IOT. A minimum of 10 CPD points need to be accumulated annually. These are to be submitted to the IOT for approval and will be added to your listing.

9. Maintain and protect patient information, and exercise etiquette when using IT and social media

9.1 Keep patients' records, including names and addresses stored in compliance with the General Data Protection Regulations (GDPR) or if outside of the UK, you must adhere to the standards for data protection legislation governing your country or location.

9.2 Keep accurate and appropriate patient records. Treatments and prescriptions, and any such record shall be held safely for seven years after the patient's last consultation or treatment. In the event that the practice is transferred to another Trichologist, all records shall be similarly kept. Records may also be submitted to the IOT for safe keeping, where they will be retained for seven years prior to destruction. All data held must comply with General Data Protection Regulation within the UK, or relevant country or location legislation to members outside of the UK.

9.3 Keep patient records confidential at all times and access restricted to the Trichologist, clinical assistant and patient. You must not disclose information obtained in confidence from a patient to anyone without prior consent from the patient or the appropriate guardian unless the interest of the patient or the Law requires such disclosure.

9.4 Ensure that photographs taken on Smart Phones are transferred to secure storage and deleted from the Smart Phone within 24 hours of taking the image.

9.5 Use online communications as the most appropriate method of communication, unless a patient or member of the public request's written communications as their sole or preferred method.

9.6 Ensure texts are typed in full, avoiding the use of text abbreviations, which some patients and members of the public may not be familiar with or understand.

9.7 Ensure any information posted online, via social networking sites (Facebook, Twitter, Snapchat, LinkedIn, WhatsApp, My Space, Bebo and others) must not make reference to your employer, employees, patients or members of the public. Any derogatory references posted by an IOT Trichologist that relates to the IOT, employers, colleagues, patients or members of the public can result in disciplinary action including removal from the register.

9.8 Ensure that you do not use Social Media sites to discuss individual patient concerns or to achieve diagnosis by consensus. If you are unable to diagnose, you should seek advice from the IOT, who will not only provide professional guidance, but may recommend further appropriate clinical education. However, sharing research, ideas and interesting facts is encouraged via the Official IOT social Media, App and Website. This is professional and helps everyone to learn and develop.

9.9 Ensure that Social Media Sites contributions do not bring yourself, or other Trichologists into disrepute. Language should be moderated at all times, with no comments "abusive" comments. The posting of photographs should only take place with express permission to post and share these.

9.10 Ensure you do not access any Social Media sites for illegal content at any time.

9.11 Ensure that frequency of Social Media Posts is carefully considered so as not to be intrusive. IOT Social Media will be moderated to prevent this.

9.12 Ensure that concerns about any abuse of Social Media should be sent via the complaints form on the website, to be independently investigated. Findings and proposals for resolutions and corrective actions will be communicated in line with the complaints procedure.

9.13 Ensure that emails do not include or access potentially offensive, abusive or pornographic content.

9.14 Ensure that emails do not include any derogatory or sensitive comments relating to the business, your employer, colleagues or patients.

9.15 Ensure you do not download any material which breaks copyright legislation.

9.16 Ensure you do not download any offensive or pornographic material.

9.17 Ensure you do not add IOT patients to your personal social network site.