

Practice Guideline- Complementary/Alternative Therapies

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Introduction

In kinesiology, **conventional therapies** are evidence-based therapeutic interventions founded on a modern conceptualization of health and human performance and consistent with the Essential Competencies of Practice of Kinesiology and what is typically taught in a four-year University program in Kinesiology in Ontario (or a course of study that has been deemed to be substantially equivalent). These interventions, like exercise prescription and functional ability assessment, form the core of kinesiology practice.

Complementary/alternative therapies fall within a broad group of therapeutic practices, services, remedies, or devices based on various theories or beliefs, which may or may not be grounded in evidence-based practice and scientific principles. This definition may include conventional treatments, practices and products used in unconventional ways and new or emerging treatments, practices and products that are based on conventional medical understanding and scientific reasoning. Complementary therapies may be specifically regulated by law, such as acupuncture, or may be unregulated.

There may not always be a clear distinction between conventional therapies and complementary/alternative therapies. Moreover, some aspects of complementary/alternative therapies may become incorporated into conventional kinesiology practice over time if scientific evidence and support for the particular intervention expands.

Given the growth in interest in complementary/alternative therapies among both the public and practitioners, the purpose of this Guideline is to provide information regarding the College's expectations for kinesiologists who:

- may recommend or provide complementary/alternative therapies in conjunction with their practice of conventional kinesiology, or
- may have patients/clients seeking or receiving complementary/alternative therapies in addition to conventional kinesiology treatment.

Expectations for Practice

General Expectations

The following general principles apply to all areas of kinesiology practice. These principles should guide a kinesiologist when dealing with complementary/alternative therapies, including when recommending or directly providing such therapies and in dealing with a patient/client who requests or is receiving these therapies from another provider.

Act in the Best Interests of the Patient/Client

- As regulated healthcare professionals, kinesiologists must always act in the best interests of the patient/client. A kinesiologist's recommendations and treatment must be focused on the needs, goals, and interests of the patient/client, not on the interests of the kinesiologist. Kinesiologists must refrain from the exploitation of patients/clients for personal or professional gain.

Respect the Autonomy of Patient/Client Choice

- Patients/clients are entitled to set goals and make decisions about their care, including goals and decisions with which the treating kinesiologist may disagree. Kinesiologists should serve as a trusted resource for healthcare information by providing unbiased, accurate, and clinically appropriate recommendations for treatment to support informed patient/client choice.
- Kinesiologists should acknowledge the diversity of cultures within a multicultural patient/client population and respect how these differing cultural perspectives may inform patient/client choice.
- Kinesiologists must always obtain a patient's/client's informed consent prior to initiating treatment and comply with the College's Practice Standard – Consent and Practice Guideline – Consent.

Avoid or Appropriately Manage Conflicts of Interest

- Kinesiologists are expected to avoid or appropriately manage potential conflicts of interest and to comply with the College's Practice Standard – Conflict of Interest. This is of particular importance when recommending or providing complementary/alternative therapies in which the kinesiologist may have a personal or financial interest.

Practice within the Limits of Personal Skill, Knowledge and Judgement

- Kinesiologists are expected to limit their practice, whether conventional or complementary/alternative, to the scope of practice of kinesiology and their individual sphere of competence¹. Kinesiologists must ensure that they possess adequate skill, knowledge, and judgement to recommend or provide any treatment modality, and should

¹ "Competence" may be broadly defined as having sufficient knowledge, skill and judgement to perform or provide a given therapy, modality or service safely and effectively. This includes an awareness of and ability to manage the reasonably foreseeable consequences and side-effects of the therapy, modality or service.

refer patients/clients to other healthcare practitioners where the required or requested treatment would fall outside of this sphere.

Compliance with Governing Laws, Standards and Guidelines

- Kinesiologists must comply with all governing laws, standards, and guidelines, both relating to their practice of kinesiology and any other complementary/alternative therapy they may offer. This includes the College's Code of Ethics, professional standards (including those regarding Record Keeping, Fees and Billing, Conflicts of Interest and Consent) as well as any licensing/registration requirements and professional standards related to other specifically regulated therapies (e.g. acupuncture).

Specific Expectations: Recommending or Providing Complementary/Alternative Therapies

Conventional Assessment First

Prior to recommending or providing a complementary/alternative therapy to a patient/client, a kinesiologist must first have performed a conventional patient/client assessment and formulated conventional treatment recommendations on the basis of that assessment. The kinesiologist's clinical assessment and judgement must be informed by evidence-based practice and be in keeping with all applicable professional standards and obligations.

Criteria for Complementary/Alternative Therapy

Moreover, if a kinesiologist plans to recommend or provide a complementary/alternative therapy to a patient/client, the recommended therapy must satisfy the following criteria:

- the therapy must be reasonably and objectively related to the patient's/client's condition and treatment goals.
- the kinesiologist must understand the extent to which the therapy is supported by conventional kinesiology practice and scientific evidence.
- the therapy or modality must be applied within the scope of practice of kinesiology and the kinesiologist's personal sphere of competence.
- the therapy must have a reasonable expectation of improving the patient's/client's condition or helping them to achieve their treatment goals.
- the overall risks and costs of the therapy must not outweigh its potential benefits, when compared with conventional therapies.

Patient/Client Discussion

In discussing treatment options with a patient/client, and when obtaining a patient's/client's informed consent, the kinesiologist must do the following:

- the kinesiologist must provide accurate and objective information about all therapeutic options, including conventional therapies, and never overstate or exaggerate the benefits (or understate or minimize the risks) of a particular therapy.
- the kinesiologist must never make a claim about a remedy, treatment, device, or procedure other than a claim that can be supported as reasonable professional opinion. When recommending a complementary/alternative therapy, the kinesiologist must provide the patient/client with the following information about the therapy:

- the extent to which the therapy is supported by conventional kinesiology practice and scientific evidence.
- how the therapy would compare with conventional kinesiology therapies.
- a reasonable assessment of the expected clinical efficacy of the therapy.

As noted above, a kinesiologist who plans to recommend or provide complementary/alternative therapies must ensure that any potential conflict of interest is avoided or appropriately managed and that they have the requisite skills, knowledge, and judgement to do so safely and effectively.

Specific Expectations: Patient/Client Requesting or Receiving Complementary/Alternative Therapies

Patient/Client Requests

Patients/clients may sometimes request information about or ask a kinesiologist to provide a particular complementary/alternative therapy. Kinesiologists are not expected to be knowledgeable about every complementary/alternative therapy that a patient/client may ask about, nor are kinesiologists expected to provide a particular therapy simply because it was requested by a patient/client.

Kinesiologists are expected to limit their practice to their sphere of competence and to recommend and provide treatment in accordance with their professional judgement and the patient's/client's best interests. To the extent possible, kinesiologists should act as a resource for accurate and objective treatment information and should refer patients/clients to another trusted source, such as another regulated healthcare provider, if the kinesiologist is unable to answer particular questions. Kinesiologists should also provide appropriate referrals to patients/clients seeking care that is not offered by the kinesiologist.

Patients/Clients Receiving Therapies Elsewhere

When completing clinical histories for patients/clients, kinesiologists should ask their patients/clients about other treatments they are receiving, including complementary/alternative therapies. Kinesiologists should make a record of any complementary/alternative therapies in the patient/client record and be mindful of any reasonably foreseeable interactions or contraindications that these therapies may create with the patient's/client's kinesiology plan of care. Kinesiologists should keep patient/client clinical histories updated at regular intervals in keeping with the College's record keeping standards.

Acknowledgement

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