

## **CODE OF ETHICS** (June 2021)

### **Introduction**

Orthotics and Prosthetics is a profession which encompasses both clinical and technical expertise. Orthotic & Prosthetic practitioners form part of the allied health network. They provide essential services to patients and enable other health care providers to implement their treatment regimes.

The South African Orthotist Prosthetist is a member of many teams, from technical and departmental teams through to their involvement in larger allied health teams. As such, an Orthotist/Prosthetist has a professional and ethical responsibility to their patient, but also to other health care providers and funding bodies, of which their practise is an integrated component. The SAOPA Code of Ethics therefore guides professional practise and interaction at all levels, ensuring quality in all that we do.

These standards will be used as a measure of the professional values and behaviours that the South African Orthotic & Prosthetic Association expects of all its members. By choosing to take up membership of SAOPA, members agree to adhere to these standards and to demonstrate a commitment to maintaining and enhancing the reputation and standing of the Prosthetic & Orthotic profession in South Africa and internationally.

These provisions apply equally to all members, Orthotist Prosthetists, O&P Assistants, O&P Technicians and O&P Students, etc in each of these categories. Members are required to be registered with the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) and conform to the HPCSA's own Standards of Conduct, Performance and Ethics.

This document ensures transparency within the Orthotic & Prosthetic profession in South Africa. It allows patients, consumers, families, carers, funding agencies and other healthcare providers to share an understanding of the expectation of service from a member of the South African Orthotic & Prosthetic Association (SAOPA). This enables and encourages everyone to work together towards high quality Orthotic and Prosthetic service delivery in South Africa. A genuine partnership between patients, consumers and providers ensures the best possible outcomes for all involved in the Orthotic and Prosthetic service episode.

The SAOPA Code of Ethics is a dynamic document, requiring regular review to ensure congruency with the needs of our patients and the changing nature of the South African health care system. These standards will be reviewed and/or updated every two years to take account of changes within prosthetic and orthotic practice and SAOPA would welcome feedback from members which would support this development process.

### **Principle 1: Responsibility to Patients**

Orthotist Prosthetists are health care professionals and as such should recognise their responsibilities and obligations to their patients. At the core of this principle is the importance of respecting patient rights and to recognise, respect and uphold the autonomy of patients and their role in the prosthetic orthotic treatment process.

In regards to acting with Responsibility to Patients, SAOPA members will:

- Ensure that discrimination in their professional practice, on the basis of ethnicity, culture, impairment, language, age, gender, sexual preference, religion, political beliefs or status in society does not occur.
- Promote and respect the dignity, privacy, autonomy and safety of all patients and their carers/family.

- Ensure the patient is appropriately engaged as much in the assessment and decision making process and consents to the prescribed treatment pathway.
- Strive for the highest possible quality of patient care, ensuring the appropriateness of service provision.
- Ensure that services are patient centred and needs driven.
- Inform all patients of financial costs associated with any goods or services and ensure that these costs are fair and reasonable, reflecting the services provided.

### **Principle 2: Professional Responsibility**

SAOPA members are professionals and as such have a professional responsibility to their colleagues, professional associations and the profession of orthotics and prosthetics.

In regards to acting with Professional Responsibility, SAOPA members will:

- Aim to build a reputation based on integrity and ability and be aware that personal conduct may affect their reputation, and that of their profession and employer.
- Maintain a loyalty to their professional association and their fellow members of the profession and shall respect and uphold their dignity.
- Respect the needs, traditions, practices, special competencies and responsibilities of their own and other professions, as well as those of the institutions and agencies that constitute their working environment.
- Not engage in any activity of a discriminatory nature, and report those that do to the appropriate body.
- Not be under the influence of alcohol or drugs which adversely affect the performance of their professional duties.
- Strive for standards of excellence in all aspect of prosthetics and orthotics, including the provision of services, education, research and promotion.
- Accept a duty to take reasonable care for patients whom they accept into their services.
- Provide services to all patients in a fair and just manner.
- Not enter into relationships that exploit patients sexually, physically, emotionally, financially, socially or in any other manner. SAOPA considers it unethical for a member to enter into a relationship which may impair their professional judgement and objectivity and/or may give rise to advantageous/disadvantageous treatment to the patient.
- Accurately represent their qualifications, education, experience, training and competence and the information about the services they provide.

### **Principle 3: Professional Competence and Standards**

SAOPA members have a professional responsibility to maintain their professional competence. They also have an obligation to their patients to acknowledge the boundaries of their competency and provide services for which they are appropriately qualified by training or experience.

SAOPA members will maintain their professional competence and standards by:

- Adhering to and supporting the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) Competency Standards.
- Completing the annual requirements of the HPCSA Continuing Professional Development program, as an essential component of membership eligibility and remain in good standing with the HPCSA.
- Being personally responsible for actively maintaining and developing their own level of professional competence and strive to improve and update knowledge and skills.
- Promoting and maintaining practise based on current knowledge and research, and develop this body of knowledge as appropriate.
- Recognising the boundaries of their competency and referring patients to another Orthotist/Prosthetist or another health professional as appropriate.
- Supporting collaborative practise and recognise the need for multidisciplinary intervention for the benefit of the patient.
- Ensuring that the people to whom they delegate tasks are competent in their execution.