



Office of Hon Dr Nick Smith

MP for Nelson

Minister for the Environment

Minister for Climate Change Issues

Minister for ACC

MIN 09/2389

Mr Kyle MacDonald
kylemacd@psychotherapy.org.nz

11 DEC 2009

Dear Mr MacDonald

Thank you for your electronic petition, received 30 October 2009, regarding changes to ACC's sensitive claims process. As it is clear that your petition was organised before you received my reply to your earlier email of 14 September 2009, I will respond again to points that you have raised in both of your communications.

ACC's role is to assist those who meet the legislated criteria. First they must have been diagnosed with a mental injury, defined in section 27 of the Injury Prevention, Rehabilitation, and Compensation Act 2001, as "a clinically significant behavioural, cognitive or psychological dysfunction" by a suitably qualified professional. Then it must be established that the mental injury was caused by sexual abuse/assault. This is the basis on which claims are covered, and once covered, each claim is managed on an individual basis.

It is a requirement to establish mental injury, not least so that ACC can be sure that the therapy and support provided is appropriate to the injury. Among those qualified to make a diagnosis are psychiatrists and clinical psychologists. Other registered health professionals who may be trained in using the DSM-IV framework include psychologists, psychotherapists and medical practitioners.

If a provider does not have the requisite qualifications, training and experience, they should advise the client that an assessment by another health professional may be needed to confirm the diagnosis, or refer the client to another professional who is able to undertake assessment using DSM-IV. The provider should also discuss with the client the range of support options available as the assessment phase is completed.

The Corporation's decision to review its guidelines is driven, not by funding, but by the implementation of best practice for managing clients with a mental injury. This process began in 2008 with the Massey Guidelines, and was followed with consultation and road shows for the professionals involved. After consultation with providers, ACC issued its revised Clinical Framework in July 2009, and held a new series of workshops.

In response to further feedback, ACC removed the requirement for a split between assessor and provider where the provider is suitably qualified and able to give sufficient information on the ACC45 to enable a cover decision to be made. ACC staff members have met with representatives of the New Zealand Association of Psychotherapists and the New Zealand Association of Counsellors to explain this change, and clear up some misunderstandings.

One misunderstanding is that access to counselling is being reduced. There is no general limit placed on counselling, treatment or support. Each of these will continue to be provided as required to meet the specific needs of clients. Another misunderstanding is that ACC will allocate clients to a therapist, which is not the case. Clients will continue to choose who they first access for therapy.

I would like to draw your attention to a recent press release from the Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners, welcoming the moves by ACC to follow evidence based care guidelines for sensitive claims clients. The full text can be accessed at:
<http://www.rnzcgp.org.nz/gps-college-welcomes-evidence-based-care-guidelines/>

You may be reassured to know that ACC has agreed to conduct an independent clinical review of its new approach to managing sensitive claims in six months' time to ensure that it is supporting clients effectively as ACC expects. The Terms of Reference for the review and who will oversee it will be available once they are confirmed.

Yours sincerely



Hon Dr Nick Smith
Minister for ACC

GPs' College welcomes evidence-based care guidelines

Press Release by Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners at 11:02 am, 02 Nov 2009

The Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners has welcomed moves by ACC to follow evidence-based care guidelines for sensitive claims clients.

College president, Dr Harry Pert, said the new guidelines will ensure patients receive best practice care that has been proven to deliver optimum results.

"The team approach has been proven to be the most effective in cases of mild to moderate mental injury." Dr Pert said.

"Recent pilot programmes have shown that very good results come from doctors working together with counsellors, psychologists and others."

"ACC's practice guidelines for sexual abuse and mental injury will strengthen these results still further. All the clinical evidence suggests the new approach ACC is adopting will be in the best interests of the patient," Dr Pert said.

"By working with psychologists early on, GPs, counsellors and others will be able to provide the best and most focussed care possible."

ACC's new treatment framework is in line with the recommendations of the Massey guidelines for the assessment and treatment of mental injury as a result of sexual assault and sexual abuse.

Published in 2008, the Massey guidelines outline a clear, evidence-based approach for the most effective treatment and rehabilitation of people who have suffered sexual abuse.

"The provision of safe, quality treatment and care that suits patients' needs and provides them with the very best health outcomes, is a major goal of the College. It is very pleasing to know that ACC's new approach is based on extensive research and clinical evidence," Dr Pert said.

ENDS

<http://www.rnzcgp.org.nz/gps-college-welcomes-evidence-based-care-guidelines/>