

# Dealing with Difficult Patients Policy

## Introduction

As an employee/subcontractor of **Maitland Myotherapy & Sports Massage** you may encounter difficult patients. When difficult patients are not managed properly it can make it increasingly difficult to communicate, provide treatment or to diffuse an escalating situation.

The Dealing with Difficult Patients Policy is applicable to all parties associated with **Maitland Myotherapy & Sports Massage**.

## Purpose

The aim of the Dealing with Difficult Patients Policy is to set out the strategies for protection and security of all parties by defining behaviours considered to be unacceptable and detailing the practical steps to be taken in dealing with offenders.

Further, there is a duty of care of providing adequate and appropriate support, both in preventing potential assault (physical or verbal) and following an actual incident. The aim of the Policy is to ensure a positive outcome for all parties involved.

This Policy aims to:

- increase all parties awareness of safety issues related to violence and aggression;
- increase all parties awareness of safety issues related to comments or requests of an explicit or inappropriate nature;
- ensure all parties are given the tools to enable them to manage an incident of unacceptable behaviour as far as reasonably practicable;
- ensure that all parties are provided with appropriate training to assist them with recognising risk and to provide all parties with practical skills to manage any situation of physical or verbal abuse in an appropriate manner;
- advise all parties that appropriate support is available if they are subject to an incident of physical or verbal abuse;
- encourage full reporting and recording of all incidents or near misses relating to physical or verbal abuse;
- reduce the exposure of incidents and injuries to all parties relating to physical or verbal abuse;
- raise awareness that violence or aggression or any behaviour considered unacceptable against any parties will not be tolerated;

## Policy

When dealing with difficult Patients it is important to be careful when communicating with the client. "Do not argue with the client, listen to their concerns and try to resolve the situation.

If there is a request outright or implied for sexual service, clarify with the client what you do at the clinic and that you do not provide the services they are looking for.

Alternatively, depending on the circumstances, or if you feel at risk such as perceived threat advise another therapist will complete the treatment, or alternatively inform the client that the treatment is discontinued, that treatment will no longer be provided and leave the room and ask them to leave.

Refusal or Discontinuation of Treatment Refusal or discontinuation of treatment becomes an option when a patient, who has been informed about the treatment facility's policies and requirements prior to the incident, breaches these requirements. The patient is either refused treatment at the time, or the treatment is discontinued. If a patient continues to be violent or non-compliant, the facility or individual treating practitioner may formally advise him or her, that treatment will no longer be provided.

It should be remembered that neither discontinuation of treatment, or patient discharge are everyday approaches: they are measures of last resort, and are only recommended where a range of other strategies have been implemented and have been shown to be unsuccessful.

Remember verbal abuse, such as angry, harsh or insulting language is also a form of abuse. There are many resources where you can find information to keep informed on how to manage different situations. One such example [http://www.hcsc.nt.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/dealing\\_with\\_difficult\\_patients.pdf](http://www.hcsc.nt.gov.au/wp-content/uploads/2010/04/dealing_with_difficult_patients.pdf)

If at any time you feel you are at risk:

- it is important to maintain control of your emotions;
- inform the client that you are terminating the treatment and that you are leaving the room and they should get ready and leave;
- leave the room and find a colleague – do not put yourself at risk by being alone with the client;
- if you are working alone, 'phone a friend' and ensure you are speaking with your friend as the client leaves the premises;
- Call the police if necessary;

Following any incident reflect on what happened:

- Could it have been handled differently?
- Did the process work?
- Document the incident in the client notes.
- Seek support from professional assault centres or mental health practitioner if you become overly concerned

Also refer to your Associations Guide to the Prevention and Management of Sexual Misconduct