

Myotherapy Association Australia



MYOTHERAPY
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Myotherapy Australia COVID-19 Pandemic Telepractice Policy

1. Purpose

This policy is intended to:

- support members of Myotherapy Australia (MA) and their clients in offering telepractice client consultations during the COVID-19 pandemic
- define the types of telepractice service that a myotherapist can offer, and
- define standards specific to telepractice client consultations to ensure that these give an optimal service and maintain the reputation of myotherapy.

This policy:

- is established by the Board of MA under its authority to establish policies in rule 44 of the MA Rules of Association, and
- supplements the MA Code of Practice and Rules of Association, and does not replace them; rather, it should be read alongside them.

This is an interim policy for the period of restrictions to slow the spread of COVID-19 in 2020. It will be replaced by a section of the MA Code of Practice on requirements specific to telepractice.

2. Definitions

Telepractice means practice as a health professional remotely using digital technology and/or telephone.

3. Code of Practice applies

Myotherapists who deliver telepractice client consultations and other telepractice professional services are bound by the MA Code of Practice in the same way as they are in delivering face-to-face services. This policy states additional standards specific to telepractice.

4. Restrictions on scope of telepractice

The telepractice services that a myotherapist can deliver are limited to:

- assessing clients' health conditions and of their state of health
- advising clients on self-treatment and self-care
- referral to other health practitioners for treatment outside the myotherapist's scope of practice
- referring clients who need urgent face-to-face treatment to the relevant health practitioner or clinic
- consultation with other practitioners, and
- delivering professional development or professional supervision.

5. Legislative/regulatory requirements of other jurisdictions

Where a myotherapist offers a telepractice consultation session or telepractice treatment advice to a client in any Australian state or territory, or in another country, the myotherapist will inform themselves of, and comply with, all legislative and regulatory requirements that apply to myotherapy practice in that jurisdiction. See section 1.1 of the MA Code of Practice for a list of the types of legislation most immediately relevant to myotherapy practice.

6. Insurance

The professional indemnity insurance, public liability insurance and products liability insurance which MA arranges for its members:

- specifically, exclude practice with clients in Canada and the United States, and only cover practice with clients in all other countries outside Australia, for costs of defending a legal action in Australian courts.
- Accordingly an MA member who delivers telepractice services to a client outside Australia will need to arrange their own additional insurance to cover them fully for practice in those countries.

7. Deciding whether a telepractice consultation is clinically appropriate

A myotherapist will assess, before conducting a telepractice consultation with a client, or at the start of the first telepractice consultation session, whether telepractice is clinically appropriate for the client. This assessment will involve establishing whether:

- the client prefers to have a face-to-face consultation (the myotherapist will respect this preference and, where practicable, provide a face-to-face consultation or refer the client to another provider for this)
- there are any indications that the client's condition requires in-person assessment by a myotherapist or another health professional
- the client is physically, sensorily and cognitively capable of participating in a telepractice consultation, or may need a support person to help them participate, and
- the client has sufficient skills in the language used by the myotherapist to participate in a telepractice consultation, or may need an interpreter to help them participate.

If this preliminary assessment raises any doubt that a telepractice consultation is appropriate, the myotherapist should refer the client for face-to-face treatment.

If the myotherapist's initial assessment of the client during a telepractice consultation reveals that the consultation will not meet their health needs, the myotherapist will not charge the client for the consultation and/or will refund any advance payment the client has made for the consultation.

8. Preliminaries: informed consent and informing client of the Code of Practice

When delivering telepractice consultations to a client, a myotherapist will, at the start of the client relationship:

- gain the client's informed consent to the telepractice consultation or series of telepractice consultations, by asking the client to complete a consent form based on the template at the end of this policy
- where a third party will be present to support the client, gain the client's informed consent to their participation, and explain that the client can ask them to withdraw from the consultation session at any time
- send them the link to the MA Code of Practice:

<https://www.myotherapy.org.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/11/Myotherapy-Association-Code-of-Practice-2019-1.pdf> , and

- explain that the Code of Practice sets out what standards of practice the client can expect from the myotherapist.

9. Requirements for telepractice consultations

Myotherapists will ensure that:

- all the conditions are in place for clients to have a satisfactory experience of a telepractice consultation, and

- the consultation will protect the privacy of both the client and the myotherapist.

To achieve this, myotherapists will meet the following detailed requirements for telepractice consultations.

9.1. *Technical arrangements*

- In choosing a telepractice consultation software platform or messaging platform for communication with clients, the myotherapist will consider its security: see the section on privacy and recording below.
- Before using the telepractice consultation platform the myotherapist will have familiarised themselves with the platform and, if necessary, have received training to use it.
- The myotherapist will inform the client before the session of the telepractice consultation platform to be used and what kind of device the client will need to participate in the consultation.
- The myotherapist will ensure that both they and the client have enough connectivity to participate in the session. This can be assessed by using a website such as <https://www.speedtest.net>. A download speed of at least five megabytes per second is needed for video interaction.
- The myotherapist will ensure, during the session, that the technology continues to enable the client and the myotherapist to communicate with each other easily and clearly for the consultation. Where the connection is inadequate for more than a brief part of the session, the myotherapist will extend the session or offer a continuation at another time, so that the client receives a full session.
- The myotherapist will have a plan of what to do if the telepractice consultation connection fails, and will inform the client of this: for example, that if the connection is lost, the myotherapist will phone the client to continue the consultation by phone or schedule a replacement session.

9.2. *Privacy and recording*

The myotherapist will ensure privacy of the client's health information by using secure software platforms for telepractice consultations and messaging with clients that may include health information.

A list of platforms with notes of any security features is attached to this policy. MA does not, however, endorse these platforms as secure platforms. It is the myotherapist's responsibility to assess the security of platforms before they choose one. To assess a platform's level of security, the myotherapist should conduct a Google search to find out whether it has had any recent security breaches, and consult someone with expertise in security of online platforms.

The myotherapist will inform the client in advance that they will need to be in a private space where the consultation cannot be overheard by others.

The myotherapist will inform the client before the session that the client must not record the session.

A telepractice consultation should not be audio-recorded or video-recorded as a normal practice, because this may be a breach of privacy, and is no substitute for keeping clinical notes of sessions. If, however, the remote consultation software platform supports recording of the session, and the myotherapist needs to record some or part of the session for a clinical purpose, they will

- explain how the recording (including any still images made from it) will be managed, stored and who will have access to them
- gain the client's specific written informed consent to record, before proceeding with the recording.

- Where the myotherapist wishes to share a recording of a client, or still images from the recording, with another health practitioner as part of a referral or request for clinical advice, they must gain the client's specific written consent to this.

9.3. Ensuring clear communication

The myotherapist will conduct a videoconference consultation session from a workspace that is professionally presented, well lit, free of distractions and private, and with the webcam positioned to give the client a clear view of the myotherapist's face and gestures.

9.4. Evaluation and continuous improvement

The myotherapist will ask clients who have had telepractice sessions to evaluate their experience, to identify opportunities to improve their telepractice service.

10. Confidentiality of health information received from clients

Where a client sends a myotherapist digital files of images of their body or health information, such as scans, videos or images, the myotherapist will transfer these to a secure server, and ensure they are permanently deleted from any other locations such as email inboxes or Dropbox folders.

11. Records

A myotherapist's clinical notes of a telepractice consultation or interaction must record the fact that it was conducted by telepractice.

12. Responsibility to refer

If a myotherapist's telepractice treatment of a client does not lead to the expected improvement in the client's health, or the client's health worsens unexpectedly during telepractice treatment, the myotherapist will refer the client to an appropriate health professional for face-to-face assessment.

13. References

Development of this policy was informed by reading the following texts of other health profession peak bodies:

- Exercise and Sport Science Australia Telehealth Policy Statement (27 March 2020)
- Speech Pathology Australia Position Statement: Telepractice in Speech Pathology (2014)
- Royal Australian College of General Practitioners Telehealth video consultation guide (2019).



Template: informed consent for telepractice

Example only – please individualise.

[Note: This template form has been drafted by MA to help you gather the information that is needed to decide whether a telepractice consultation is clinically appropriate and gain the client's informed consent to such a consultation. You should tailor the form so that is relevant to your particular circumstances and use of telepractice.]

(Clinician's or clinic's name)

ABN:

Consent to provide myotherapy services through telepractice (telehealth)

Your name	Date of birth
Phone	Email address

What is the purpose of this form?

This form gathers information about you for, and requests your consent to participate in, a telepractice consultation with your myotherapist.

What is telepractice?

Telepractice is the practice of myotherapy using telecommunication to provide myotherapy services to clients. In our practice we use videoconferencing to hold consultations in real-time but may use other media, such as email, telephone or SMS, for related communication. Telepractice is sometimes referred to as telehealth.

What does a telepractice consultation involve?

A telepractice consultation usually involves some or all of the following:

- We will discuss your health and your health history with you and, where appropriate, will offer information and advice.
- You may bring a support person with you, as you might in a face-to-face consultation.
- If you attend a health service to participate in a telepractice consultation, other health professionals may be present and may need to examine you according to your myotherapist's instructions.
- A technical support person might be present for part of the consultation to help with technical issues.
- You must not video or audio-record the consultation, unless your myotherapist gives you written permission to do so.
- You must have a device that enables you to take part in a videoconference consultation, and an internet connection with sufficient connectivity for this.

What are the potential benefits of telepractice?

Telepractice may:

- improve your access to myotherapy services
- reduce your need for travel
- decrease exposure to infectious disease.

What are the potential risks of telepractice?

Telepractice may:

- be impaired by technical problems, such as delays from technology failures.
- not offer the same visual and sound quality for observations and modelling
- need someone on site with you to assist the myotherapist
- not feel the same as an on site session

- not achieve everything that is required and therefore require another telepractice consultation or a face-to-face consultation.
- include practices and procedures that may not be as easy for you to understand in a telepractice setting as they are on site
- somewhat increase exposure to privacy and digital security risks. (See next section.)

Will my privacy be protected?

This practice is subject to the Privacy Act 1988 and must comply with requirements for collection, use and disclosure of personal information, including through telepractice. The myotherapist must maintain confidentiality and privacy standards during sessions, and in creating, keeping and transmitting records.

We will use the following secure software platforms to protect the privacy of consultations with you and ensure the security of your health information: for consultation sessions, [name of videoconference platform] and, for subsequent communications, [name of messaging platform].

At times, audio and videorecordings of sessions may be taken to support the myotherapist's work, as might occur in a face-to-face consultation. You will be informed before a recording takes place and can refuse to be recorded for any reason. The myotherapist will explain the reason for the recording and how it will be stored.

While the myotherapist is required to meet standards to protect your privacy and security, telecommunication, such as videoconferencing, may increase exposure to hacking and other online risks; as with all online activities, there is no guarantee of complete privacy and security protection. You may decrease the risk by using a secure internet connection, meeting with the myotherapist from a private location, and only using secure channels for other communications.

Am I eligible for private health fund rebates?

As of the date of approval of this policy, private health funds do not offer rebates for myotherapy telepractice services. Health funds are, however, listening to their members and may soon expand rates to include telepractice consultations.

What does informed consent mean?

There are a few important principles related to informed consent:

- **You must be given relevant information.** Ask the myotherapist if you have questions about telepractice and the services offered.
- **You have the right to understand the information.** Ask the myotherapist if you do not understand.
- You have the right to choose. If you do not agree to telepractice, you may refuse to participate. You may agree to or refuse specific activities and procedures.
- **You have the right to stop using telepractice at any time.** You can change your mind about telepractice or a specific activity or procedure, even in the middle of a session.
- **You can agree or refuse in writing or verbally.** You may give your consent using the form below. You may also give consent or change your mind by telling the myotherapist. Consent and refusal that you give verbally will be documented by the myotherapist.
- **You can ask about alternatives to telepractice.** If you refuse or change your mind about telepractice services, your myotherapist will discuss any other options with you. The myotherapist may or may not be able to offer alternative services.

Written consent form:

Please tick all that apply:

- I agree to receive myotherapy services via telepractice.
- I understand that I may agree or refuse any service or part of a service at any time. I can agree or refuse in writing or verbally.
- I understand that private health fund rebates are not currently available for myotherapy telepractice consultations.

Signature: _____ Date: _____

Name of person signing: _____ Date: _____

Myotherapist: _____ Date: _____

Telepractice platform providers

We have collated just some providers of videoconferencing software below. Please be aware this is a guide only. We are not endorsing any platform.

You still need to check terms and conditions carefully and may wish to search for alternatives.

When considering your choice, you need to examine important factors such as security, ease of use and cost.

Health-specific telepractice platforms

Physitrack

- 30-day free trial with options starting from \$29.28 per month after, including video consultations.
- Username and password required by both patient and practitioner to access.
- Includes thousands of exercises that can be sent to patients.

Coviu

- Enables one-on-one video consultations with in-built booking and payment system.
- Peer-to-peer calls are fully encrypted with secure file sharing.
- One-week free trial with options starting from \$19.95 per month.

Cliniko

- Complete Practice Management Software (PMS)
- Peer-to-peer calls are fully encrypted.
- 30-day free trial; starting from \$45 per month after.
- Integrates with a range of exercise prescription software including Physitrack and Coviu.

Healthbank

- PMS features with telehealth consultations available within the app.
- Practitioner search function so potential clients can easily find you.
- Costs between free and \$25.99 per month depending on service level.

Other videoconferencing platforms (non-health specific)

Facetime

Skype

WhatsApp

Zoom

There have been questions regarding security on some or most of these, and other popular platforms. Please check thoroughly before using one of these platforms, to ensure they comply with security and privacy laws and MA's COVID-19 Telepractice Policy.

Further guidance on security and privacy considerations can be found at:

<http://www.mbsonline.gov.au/internet/mbsonline/publishing.nsf/Content/connectinghealthservices-secpriv>