

Guest Editorial:

CHIROPRACTIC SCOPE OF PRACTICE AND CLINICAL COMPETENCIES IN AUSTRALIA

Part 2 – A Competency Framework for Well-being and Lifestyle Management

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CHIROPRACTIC SCOPE OF PRACTICE AND CLINICAL COMPETENCIES IN AUSTRALIA

Part 2 – A Competency Framework for Well-being and Lifestyle Management

This editorial is the second of a three-part series and focuses on the advanced competency framework for Well-being and Lifestyle Management chiropractors in Australia. It is based on the accreditation of advanced post-graduate educational pathways, extended scope of practice, and titling within the Australasian Institute of Chiropractic Education (AICE). (1) This editorial is preceded by Part 1 – “Scope of practice and advanced titling.” (2)

General and advanced clinical competencies for Australian Chiropractors

Health professions, including chiropractic, are evolving rapidly, and our profession must demonstrate a willingness and ability to adapt and evolve to meet the needs of our client populations and the demands of the contemporary healthcare environment. (3) The identification of competencies required by clinicians, educators, and regulators is vital to this process, both to demonstrate the contribution that chiropractic can make to individual and community health and advance the reach of the chiropractic profession. (4, 5)

Competency frameworks provide a link between professional practice and education, training, and assessment. (6) They inform processes such as professional accountability, standard-setting, assessment strategies, and curriculum design by documenting the knowledge, skills, and attitudes required for competent performance and outlining the characteristics of a competent workforce, facilitating mobility, and analysing or assessing expertise. (5, 7)

The Council on Chiropractic Education Australia (CCEA) has developed interlinked accreditation standards and competency standards which are the mainstay of undergraduate education in Australia, New Zealand, and the Asian chiropractic programs. These standards have been adopted for registration as a chiropractor with a general scope of practice by the Chiropractic Board of Australia. (8-10)

The AICE has introduced a new set of advanced competencies based on accredited post-graduate education, leading to extended scope of practice and advanced titling through membership of one of five clinical practice groups (CPGs) in focused areas of practice. (2, 11) The Well-being and Lifestyle Management Clinical Practice Group (WLM CPG) provides advanced clinical competencies for systematically assessing and managing lifestyle factors and behaviours associated with neuromusculoskeletal (nMSK) presentations and the increasing prevalence of chronic diseases in Australia for improved health outcomes and well-being of chiropractic clients. (2, 11)

Well-being and Lifestyle Management (WLM) CPG membership requirements

WLM CPG membership is awarded at one of four levels common to all of the AICE CPGs: Fellow, Titled Member, Member, and Student Member, each with different pre-requisites, benefits, rights, and responsibilities. (11, 12) AICE titling as Fellow of the Australasian Institute of Chiropractic Education (FAICE) and a Titled Member of the Australasian Institute of Chiropractic Education (MAICE) allows accredited chiropractors to use post-nominals to promote their advanced clinical competencies to colleagues, the community, referrers, and employers. Members and Student Members enjoy the benefits of advanced knowledge, skills, additional resources, and discounts on seminars without access to the use of post-nominals. The entry requirements and compliance conditions for membership in the WLM CPG appear in Appendix 1. A grand-parenting period applies until the end of 2025, during which concessions are available to satisfy titling requirements within the AICE, after which more stringent qualifications will apply. (12)

AICE WLM accredited post-graduate education is available in three phases, all of which must be completed to be eligible for WLM titling. In the absence of any specific current post-graduate chiropractic qualifications, Lifestyle Medicine courses external to the profession will be adapted to suit chiropractic needs. Phase 1 involves passing an exam following the online 30-hour Board Review Course offered by the American College of Lifestyle Medicine (13) plus 10 hours of in-person attendance and an estimated 100 hours of exam preparation for subsequent certification by the Australasian College of Lifestyle Medicine (14). An alternative Phase 1 pathway is available by successful completion of a graduate program in Lifestyle Medicine offered by one of three universities: James Cook University (15-17), Southern Cross University (18), or Avondale University (19-21). Phase 2 involves successful completion of the AICE WLM “Essentials” course, currently under development, which will focus on the application of Lifestyle Medicine principles to the chiropractic management of specific nMSK conditions. Phase 3 requires a demonstration of the ability to add to the research evidence-base by the production of at least one peer-reviewed publication.

The competency framework for Well-being and Lifestyle Management chiropractors

The AICE WLM CPG has developed an advanced framework of the five domains relating to the competencies necessary to attain advanced titling as a WLM chiropractor. (11, 22) A more expansive outline of the detailed competencies relating to the following five domains appears online. (22) These are partly derived from competencies identified by a US national consensus panel for prescribing lifestyle medicine in 2010. (23)

1. Clinical expertise

The WLM chiropractor demonstrates proficiency in the clinical assessment and person-centred management of nMSK conditions, the systematic assessment and management

of the lifestyle factors associated with the clinical presentation, and the client's readiness to adopt sustainable behaviour change. The expertise and practice of the WLM chiropractor are informed by the best available evidence, clinically relevant, and guided by shared decision-making and goal setting to incorporate the client's values and circumstances using validated outcome measures for optimum health and well-being.

2. Professional advancement

WLM chiropractors practice with ethical principles and a duty of care to clients, engendered by good professional relationships. The WLM chiropractor demonstrates an ongoing commitment to improving evidence-informed individual knowledge and clinical skills, personal development, self-awareness, and client awareness. The WLM CPG members advocate for the advancement of the chiropractic profession, for the broadening of evidence-informed clinical knowledge and practice guidelines and the improved links and increased engagement with all sectors of the contemporary healthcare community.

3. Education and research

The ability to acquire and apply the best available evidence from multiple sources is a critical component of evidence-informed practice. A WLM chiropractor integrates the best available research evidence with their clinical expertise and the client's unique values and circumstances to provide the best possible outcomes for clients. (24) As WLM chiropractors progress to Titled membership and Fellowship status, they also contribute to independent research projects and facilitate the translation of evidence into practice through mentoring and peer support, within and outside the profession.

4. Leadership and collaboration

Leaders promote healthy behaviours as fundamental to clinical chiropractic management, disease prevention, and health promotion. Leadership begins with the WLM chiropractor practicing healthy personal behaviours, as a credible role model and resource for clients, community members, and other health providers involved in lifestyle management and behaviour change. A WLM chiropractor acknowledges the expert knowledge and skills of other health professionals and the importance of interprofessional referral and co-management by adopting timely and collaborative shared care arrangements for the benefit of the client.

5. Practice modeling

WLM chiropractors create a practice environment that is person-centred, collaborative, safe, efficient, affordable, and provide resources to move the clients towards self-efficacy. They provide an interdisciplinary team of collaborative health professionals, validated health-risk assessment tools, outcome measures, and evidence-informed lifestyle behaviour-change strategies, whilst providing accessible resources and support for

clients and their communities.

Clinical Implications of the competency framework for WLM chiropractors

Management of nMSK conditions

Musculoskeletal conditions are the leading cause of years lost to disability and the third greatest contributor to the burden of disease in Australia. (25) They are also the most common conditions presented to chiropractors in Australia. (26) WLM manages nMSK presentations using the appropriate manual therapies preferred by the individual chiropractor and according to the best available evidence. Recommendations on best practices for chiropractic management of nMSK conditions have been provided by a steering committee of experts in research and management. (27) These include the application of the wholistic biopsychosocial (BPS) model of health, which emphasises the body-mind approach, key social, cultural and environmental drivers, health promotion and the prevention of disease. (28) This is preferred to the reductionist biomedical model, which defines health as purely the absence of disease and is more focussed on symptom management, disease care and is associated with poorer outcomes and greater health inequality. (28) Key to the BPS model is the use of validated measures of assessment and treatment outcomes, the prioritisation of self-management and non-pharmacological approaches, active client interventions, the inclusion of both physical and mind-body approaches, the identification of the neurophysiological type of pain, interprofessional collaboration and the consideration of risk factors for acute and chronic pain, using the “flags” model. (29)

Lifestyle management of risk factors for chronic diseases associated with nMSK conditions

One in two Australians has at least one chronic disease, with preventable lifestyle factors such as poor nutrition, physical inactivity, obesity, stress, alcohol and tobacco use, and social exclusion known to account for at least 70% of the total healthcare burden. (25, 30, 31) Clinical preventive services and health promotion are known to add years of healthy life and to prevent nMSK conditions, comorbid disease, and premature deaths. (32) While most chiropractic clients in Australia seek care for musculoskeletal conditions, they also present with comorbid chronic diseases, providing a great opportunity for chiropractors to contribute to the improvement of the general health of individual clients and to mitigate the community burden of chronic diseases. (26)

Australian chiropractors report “often” discussing a range of topics as part of their care/management plans, including physical activity (84.9%), diet/nutrition (50.5%), and occupational health and safety (40.9%). (26, 33) WLM chiropractors have advanced skills in the systematic assessment and management of the key lifestyle behaviours and

associated risk factors known to be important determinants of health including diet/nutrition, physical activity/inactivity, stress/mental health, sleep hygiene, tobacco use, alcohol and other risky behaviours, and social connectedness. (22) Each is assessed using simple, short, and validated questionnaires completed by the client, enabling easy implementation in practice. A lifestyle management history and physical examination includes lifestyle vital signs, anthropometric measurements, risk factor assessments, lab work and interpretation, diagnosis via validated assessment tools, and outcome-focused management including collaborative care and referrals. (34) Recommendations on best practices for integrating health promotion and clinical preventive services with chiropractic care have been developed by a panel of expert chiropractic clinicians and researchers. (35)

Lifestyle behaviour change using a health coach approach

Behaviour change is fundamental for effective and sustainable lifestyle changes. Clinicians are viewed as credible sources of health information and their recommendations have enormous potential to influence clients' lifestyle behaviours. (36, 37) Despite this, effectively motivating clients to change behaviours can be a frustrating and difficult challenge. Clinicians have cited lack of time, inadequate confidence, lack of knowledge and skill as major barriers to counseling clients about lifestyle interventions. (38, 39) The World Health Organization states that "simply giving information to clients is unlikely to change behaviour; health care providers must understand the psychological principles that underlie self-management training and comprehend that motivating clients requires more than imparting brief information...." (40)

WLM chiropractors use a health coach approach to enable clients to understand and adopt sustainable healthy lifestyle behaviours. Health coaching is a person-centred approach that views each client as an expert in their own life and uses evidence-based behaviour change techniques to empower them to take ownership of their health to promote client self-efficacy, self-determination, and personal responsibility. This approach is significantly more successful for the prevention, management, and reversal of several chronic health conditions than simply providing health information to clients. (41, 42)

Health goals are co-developed via an interdisciplinary team involving the client, other health providers, families, and social support groups according to the best available research evidence and the client's unique values and circumstances. (43) Informed consent, respectful, supportive dialogue and shared decision-making ensures high standards of ethical co-management and safety. Specific lifestyle prescriptions are accompanied by simple, written action plans according to SMART principles (Specific, Measurable, Achievable, Relevant, and in an agreed Timeframe) and may adopt the 5A's (Assess, Advise, Agree, Assist, Arrange) of behaviour change as the overarching practical framework. (44)

Using the transtheoretical model, a WLM chiropractor firstly identifies one of six stages of the client's readiness for lifestyle behaviour changes using a brief questionnaire. Next, the WLM chiropractor scores the client's perception of the importance of the intended behaviours and their confidence in achieving them on a scale from 0 to 10. Finally, the chiropractor guides the client to take action toward achieving their health goals by using a positive psychology technique appropriate to their stage of readiness. (43, 45) Separate readiness assessments for each of the lifestyle pillars are vital, as the client may be ready to change one lifestyle ahead of others. Relapse prevention and relapse management strategies are an important part of this process.

WLM chiropractors are introduced to the fundamentals of health coaching techniques through the WLM accredited educational pathways. (13, 14) Further training, mentoring, and interprofessional networking are available through courses approved by the Health Coaches Association of Australia and New Zealand (HCANZA) and may lead to certification as a Health and Well-being coach. (43, 46)

Interdisciplinary teams, co-management and available medicare rebates

Most chiropractors in Australia (78%) practice in a multi-practitioner setting, with 46.0% of all chiropractors working with one other health practitioner, and 19.2% working with two other health practitioners, with the most common "other" practitioner type being another chiropractor (56.6%), a massage therapist (29.6%) or a psychologist/counselor (12.0%). In terms of professional referral relationships, chiropractors report sending and/or receiving referrals from GPs (55.1%), podiatrists (38.5%), and physiotherapists (30.5%). (26)

WLM chiropractors may choose, when appropriate, to use an *interdisciplinary team* approach that integrates separate disciplines into a single consultation or a co-managed care plan and has been shown to have higher levels of treatment compliance, enhanced client engagement and chronic disease self-management, more sustainable lifestyle behaviour changes and improved health outcomes. (47) Client history taking, assessment, diagnosis, intervention, and management goals are conducted by the team, together with the client, at the one time. Chiropractors can claim a medicare rebate for co-managed consultations, the item codes for which will be outlined in our upcoming WLM "Essentials" course. This contrasts with a *multidisciplinary team* approach which utilizes the skills and experience of individuals from different disciplines, but with each discipline approaching the client from their perspective in separate individual consultations and with limited collaborative goal setting and case management. Both interdisciplinary and multidisciplinary teams provide more knowledge and experience than disciplines operating in isolation. (48)

The outcomes of interdisciplinary team care should include: advocating for lifestyle

management as a primary modality for chronic disease, supporting high levels of client self-efficacy and self-management, and high levels of treatment compliance. (47) The makeup of the team will vary and may include a dietitian, an exercise specialist, a general practitioner, a practice nurse, a stress management specialist, a sleep specialist, an administrative assistant, and other allied healthcare providers who focus on preventing illness, mitigating risk factors and resolving the underlying cause of the disease. (49) Interventions designed to improve interdisciplinary teamwork should focus on an appropriate skill mix, a supportive team climate, respecting and understanding roles, clarity of vision, positive leadership, and good communication strategies. The specifics of teamwork activities include the sharing of client files, appropriate case-conferencing approaches, and meeting style or frequency. (50)

Practice modeling, office systems, and data capture

A WLM chiropractic practice functions as a model for healthcare delivery by providing effective educational resources and office procedures necessary to enable the systematic assessment and management of lifestyle behaviours that reflect the values intended for improved health outcomes and the mitigation of the burden of chronic diseases.

WLM chiropractors practice good personal healthcare behaviours as a model for their clients. Numerous studies have shown that clinicians' health behaviours and disease-prevention practices impact the likelihood of providing lifestyle advice to their clients. (51-54) Chiropractors should be able to conduct their readiness assessment and develop a personal action plan to adopt and monitor healthy behaviours with regular follow-up protocols.

Well-being programs should be an integral part of office culture providing both staff and clients the opportunities to adopt healthy eating, regular physical activity, good ergonomics, and other healthy lifestyle practices. Office systems, electronic health records, and other assessment tools are key to identifying clients requiring follow-up, tracking, screening, and monitoring of their health outcomes and test results. A toolkit of resources to apply WLM protocols in the management of lifestyle behaviours in the management of chronic diseases will be provided through the upcoming WLM "Essentials" course.

Comprehensive health records also provide opportunities for data capture, correlation, and association of lifestyle behaviours with health outcomes for targeted interventions and to add the research evidence base. New models of care not traditionally common in chiropractic offices may include shared medical appointments (SMA's), telehealth, and group visits. Chiropractors can claim a medicare rebate for all of these consultation types, the item codes for which will be outlined in our upcoming WLM "Essentials" course.

Healthy lifestyle advocacy should involve all clients and their families, as well as community policy and decision-makers. The WLM practice acts as a resource and education centre to provide information about local community health resources, healthy

lifestyle initiatives, and a network of lifestyle management health providers to assure consistent and up-to-date referrals and optimal health outcomes. Examples of these resources will also be provided in the upcoming WLM “Essentials” course.

Research skills and the evidence base

The WLM CPG recognises and acknowledges the importance of quality research to further advance the current evidence-base for the management of nMSK conditions and co-morbid chronic diseases frequently presented to chiropractors.

The WLM CPG supports and encourages chiropractors to develop the necessary research literacy skills to enable the production of high-quality peer-reviewed publications and original research. The WLM chiropractor recognises the vital role future research will play in demonstrating the efficacy of WLM chiropractic interventions for improved clinical and health outcomes and to justify the advocacy of chiropractic practice to vested third-party stakeholders.

The WLM CPG within the AICE has a broad vision for the implementation of lifestyle management into chiropractic practice and the opportunities that will present for chiropractors with Well-being and Lifestyle Management skills. (11) Implementation strategies, opportunities, and the future direction for the WLM CPG will be outlined in Part 3 of this editorial series – “New horizons for chiropractors with advanced titling in Well-being and Lifestyle Management.”

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Appendix 1 – Well-being and Lifestyle Management Clinical Practice Group Membership Requirements

Levels		WLM CPG Entry requirements – Grand-parenting phase valid until 31 st December 2025	
Fellow	Competency		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Highest level of knowledge and competence in WLM • Registered chiropractor • 10 years minimum of clinical experience 		
	Education & CPD		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certification with the Australasian Society of Lifestyle Medicine • Completed WLM CPG's "Essentials" course and passed the written and practical exams • 25 hours of WLM CPD in the past 12 months. • Completion of the AICE "How to Publish" webinar • Completion of a mentoring program provided by WLM Fellows 		
	Memberships		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Australasian Society of Lifestyle Medicine (ASLM) Full member 		
	Publications		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum 2 peer-reviewed publications 		
Titled member	Competency		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • High level of knowledge and competence in WLM • Registered chiropractor • 5 years minimum of clinical experience 		
	Education & CPD		
	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Certification with the Australasian Society of Lifestyle Medicine • Completed WLM CPG's "Essentials" course and passed the written and practical exams 		

	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 25 hours of WLM CPD in the past 12-months • Completion of the AICE “How to Publish” webinar • Option to pursue AICE WLM Fellowship pathway <p>Memberships</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ASLM Full member <p>Publications</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Minimum 1 peer-reviewed publication
Member	<p>Competency</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • General member/Academic/ Researcher/Scientist/Educator (chiropractic graduate but optional chiropractic registration) OR • Registered chiropractor • Interest in WLM chiropractic <p>Seeking AICE titling:</p> <p>Education & CPD</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • 12 hours min of WLM CPD within the past 12 months • Completion of the AICE “How to Publish” webinar <p>Not Seeking Titling Pathways:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Interest in WLM chiropractic • Option to pursue learning pathway to titled member
Student	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> • ACA Student interested in Wellbeing & Lifestyle Management Chiropractic • Member of a university-based WLM student interest group • Completion of the AICE “How to Publish” webinar