

Podiatrists Registration Board of Tasmania

Non-Podiatric Foot Care Policy

Policy Number 1/2004	Date Implemented December 2004	Replaces N/A	Review January 2006
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The aim of the guidelines is to assist the Board to uphold the Podiatrists Registration Act 1995 in regard to the provision of podiatry services and to help clarify the issue of foot care being provided by persons other than registered podiatrists.

In Tasmania there is a range of non-podiatrists who provide foot care services including

- Beauticians and pedicurists
- Community based or residential facility based individuals including currently registered or previously registered nurses
- Foot care assistants employed by the Department of Health and Human Services
- Podiatry assistant employed within podiatry practices
- Orthotists, prosthetists and suppliers of surgical footwear.

The Podiatrists Registration Board defines podiatry as “the diagnosis and treatment by medical, surgical, electrical, mechanical or manual methods of ailments of the foot or foot related structures and appropriate preventative treatment and education”

Offences under the Act as outlined in Part 6 of the Act Section 57(1) states “a person who is not a registered podiatrist must not practise podiatry.” Section 60 states “a body corporate must not cause or allow a podiatric service to be provided in its name or on its behalf unless the person providing the service is a registered podiatrist.”

There are a number of terms used to describe the practice of foot care provided to people that does not fall within the definition of podiatry. These include basic foot care and foot hygiene. The Australasian Podiatry Council defined foot hygiene as “routine care of normal skin and nail. It includes duties such as cleaning feet and interdigital spaces, nail care due to non-pathological toe nails (includes cutting and filing), skin care (including applying moisturiser and massage).”

The Board acknowledges that persons other than podiatrists provide foot care to varying degrees as part of general health and hygiene. The Podiatrists Registration Act 1995 exempts medical practitioners, physiotherapists and nurses from any offence if they undertake podiatry during the normal part of their duties.

The Board is not empowered to regulate non-podiatrists who undertake podiatry. However, if any person who is not a registered podiatrist is considered to practise podiatry then there may be an offence under the Act. The relevant sections are Sections 57 (1) and 60 as described earlier.

The key distinction between podiatry and basic footcare is that podiatry involves the treatment of ailments of the foot, while basic foot care is concerned with the care of normal feet only. The Board has previously made this distinction following investigation of activities of pedicurists. Examples of practice that would constitute podiatry include;

- Use of a scalpel to debride skin and/or calluses
- Use of a drill or specialist tool

In Australia there has been an expansion of activities of persons providing basic footcare in response to increasing community demand. Training courses have been developed and implemented and in some areas the scope of training and practice of these practitioners extends to service to people with abnormal conditions of the foot.

Given that providers of foot care by non-podiatrists are not regulated under the Act, the Board believes that it is essential that the scope of practice and conditions under which such practitioners operate should be clearly defined. Persons who provide treatment and care to persons with ailments of the foot who do not comply with these guidelines could be subject to action by the Board for an offence against Section 57(1) of the Act.

There are no essential requirements for persons who undertake basic footcare as defined in this policy. However the Board strongly recommends that

- persons have successfully completed a relevant course of training in relation to the practice they undertake.
- there is regular liaison with a podiatrist to enable the referral of clients who have ailments of the foot and require podiatric care.
- Insurance is held to protect clients from any adverse outcome from the provision of basic footcare.

Relevant Policies and Guidelines

Australasian Podiatry Manual, March 2001, Policy in relation to foot hygiene and Podiatry Assistants.

Policy Statement – New England Area Health Service – Basic Foot Care by Nurses

Approved

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Chairperson

3 December 2004