

30 May 2024

Te Kaunihera Rata o Aotearoa
Medical Council of New Zealand

By email to: consultation@mcnz.org.nz

Tēnā koe

Re: Consultation - Draft Statement on 'Treating yourself and those close to you'

The Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Psychiatrists (RANZCP) welcomes the opportunity to provide input on the Medical Council of New Zealand's draft statement on 'Treating yourself and those close to you' (the Statement).

The RANZCP is the principal organisation representing the medical specialty of psychiatry in New Zealand and Australia and is responsible for training, educating, and representing psychiatrists on policy issues. The RANZCP represents more than 8400 members, including more than 5900 qualified psychiatrists and is guided on policy matters by a range of expert committees including the Tu Te Akaaka Roa, the New Zealand National Committee.

Tu Te Akaaka Roa broadly agrees with the principles outlined in the document, which align with our own guidelines, including the RANZCP's Code of Ethics. We agree that psychotherapy interventions with close relations is never appropriate and that there is a need for doctors to have their own GP and avoid treating themselves or those close to them.

However, in our view, the document is very prescriptive and does not allow sufficient room for individual circumstances, including emergencies, rural settings, and whānau-based care. For example, in some situations, a doctor may be required to prescribe or administer psychotropic medication or drugs of dependence to a family member due to medical emergencies, the unavailability of another doctor (e.g., rural situations), or where tangata whai ora is not able to be transferred.

Additionally, the Statement does not discriminate between different types of treatment or medications. The RANZCP believes that doctors should be able to treat a family member's minor condition (e.g., prescribing antibiotics for an infected finger) if the doctor adheres to the core principles and ethics of the profession. Similarly, it is important to distinguish between different types of psychotropic medication. We suggest that the Statement instead places greater emphasis on making doctors aware of the ethical principles of best practice and provide guidance on how to navigate challenging situations.

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on this Statement. If you have any questions or concerns regarding this letter, please contact nzoffice@ranzcp.org.

Ngā manaakitanga



Dr Elizabeth Moore
President



Dr Hiran Thabrew
National Chair, Tu Te Akaaka Roa

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