

ACC News

» A newsletter for health care professionals

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Pandemic preparedness – your cover, and ACC’s plans

As the world prepares for a potential flu pandemic, ACC is working closely with the Ministry of Health and other interested organisations on a range of strategies and business continuity plans. In this issue of ACC News, we discuss your cover as a treatment professional and ACC’s current preparedness plans for a pandemic.

Cover for treatment professionals

According to the Injury Prevention, Rehabilitation, and Compensation Act 2001, ACC can provide cover for the flu as long as it is a work-related infection and meets the specific criteria outlined in section 30 of the Act.

In ACC’s view, treatment professionals who work with flu-infected patients are likely to be covered given that:

- » their work means they are likely to consult in close proximity to, have direct contact with, and perform other tasks (eg, tests) in relation to these patients
- » they have a much greater chance of exposure to the flu than when they are away from work
- » the risk of catching the flu is significantly greater for treatment professionals (and in their environment) than it is for persons in other work environments.

It’s important to remember that ACC considers every claim for occupational disease or infection on its own merits, so we cannot guarantee that all treatment professionals who catch the flu would be covered.

ACC’s preparedness for a pandemic

ACC’s business continuity plan for a potential pandemic aligns closely with, and is based on similar scenarios to, the strategies and plans of the Ministry of Health. These are based on five response stages: planning for a pandemic, keeping it out, stamping it out, managing it, and recovering from it. New Zealand is currently at stage one (planning).

In the event of a flu pandemic (or a similar emergency), ACC’s priority will be to support seriously injured and high-needs claimants, as well as provide ongoing payments to claimants.

Our plans for claimants include arranging for an extra month’s medical consumables for those high-needs claimants we currently supply. However, we are asking all treatment providers to consider their patients’ prescription medicine needs in a potential pandemic – and to encourage them to make their own plans. These should cover who will care for them and provide food and supplies if their carers are ill, and whether they have all the medicines and supplies they need.

You can get more information on the flu and New Zealand’s preparedness for a pandemic at:
www.moh.govt.nz/pandemicinfluenza.

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Acupuncture Treatment Profiles launched

Acupuncturists throughout New Zealand are about to benefit from a new publication recently launched by ACC – the **Acupuncture Treatment Profiles**.

Developed over more than two years by ACC and the New Zealand Register of Acupuncturists, with help from the New Zealand Acupuncture Standards Authority, the Profiles are a landmark achievement. They bring together two distinct approaches to healing: the ancient tradition of acupuncture and the contemporary framework of injury treatment and management.

The Treatment Profiles enable providers and funders to know the level and extent of acupuncture treatment to be expected for around 140 common injury types. They describe current 'good practice' and the results that should be achieved, and are intended to provide flexibility and choice in judgement according to patients' individual circumstances.

By early July all acupuncturists should have received a copy of the Treatment Profiles. They are also available at the 'For Providers' section of www.acc.co.nz. For further information, please contact kathryn.hall@acc.co.nz

The Acupuncture Treatment Profiles are the latest in a series developed by ACC over the past six years. The others in the series are:

- GP Treatment Profiles
- Physiotherapy Treatment Profiles
- Chiropractic Treatment Profiles.

ACC is currently developing the next in the series, Nurse Treatment Profiles, which are expected to be complete later in the year.

Budget signals additional funding

The Government's 2006 Budget provides funding for three key ACC initiatives:

- From 1 April 2007, specified treatment providers (such as acupuncturists, chiropractors, occupational therapists, osteopaths, physiotherapists, podiatrists and speech therapists) will receive a 26.3% increase in regulated rates for treatment consultations – which means an increase of \$5 per treatment visit and \$12.57 per hour.
- Funding will be available from 1 July 2006 to enable ACC to increase its payments to contracted providers of home-based rehabilitation. This aims to address the current labour market shortage by ensuring service stability until the sector develops its own medium- and long-term strategy.
- A new pilot programme will provide up to five counselling sessions to the non-offending parents responsible for children with sensitive claims (ie, claims for a mental injury resulting from sexual abuse). Running within strict guidelines for two years from 1 July 2006, the pilot will aim to providing coping and understanding strategies to caregivers, who in turn can provide a supportive environment and help the children in their rehabilitation and recovery.

Short notes

This month's Goodfellow case study

June's Goodfellow Unit case study relates to knee injuries. To complete the study (and gain CME points), visit the Club for CME in General Practice at www.goodfellowunit.org.

ACC Update binders available

If your ACC Update binder file is starting to burst at the seams, you can order a new one! Simply contact Vicky Johnson on vicky.johnson@acc.co.nz.

Pacific community fono

During June and July ACC is hosting a series of fono with Pacific communities around New Zealand. With attendees including key community and church leaders as well as health professionals and government agency representatives, the fono aim to discuss why Pacific people don't use ACC services as often as could be expected – and to provide information on how ACC works and the help available to people injured in accidents.

For more information, phone 0800 101 996 or contact Fili Tupu of ACC's Pacific Development team at fili.tupu@acc.co.nz or on 09 915 8143.

Fieldays focus on occupational hearing loss

Preventing occupational hearing loss was the focus of ACC's exhibit at this year's Fieldays, held on 14-17 June.

Recognising that the condition is a significant problem among workers in the agricultural sector, the exhibit aimed to educate and inform Fieldays visitors.

Contact details:

New case studies available

Two new case studies covering return to work after an injury will be sent to all GPs by the end of June. If you don't receive yours, please contact Vicky Johnson at vicky.johnson@acc.co.nz

Smart Tips Online unveiled

Physiotherapists developing rehabilitation regimes with injured sportspeople can now access a great new online resource that helps in communicating key training and safety information.

Called Smart Tips Online (and available at www.acc.co.nz/smarttips), this free tool enables you to customise unique wallet cards which, when printed – in colour or black and white – fold into fun, compact reference guides.

Featuring sport-specific safety tips and warm-up routines, the cards also include room for personalised information such as rehabilitation goals and steps. All you need to do is visit the site, choose the relevant sport and follow the instructions.

Based on feedback from the recent physiotherapists' conference in Auckland, ACC's Provider Relationship Managers will also be providing physiotherapists with two-sided 'stretch' sheets to pass on to patients. Easily customised to your patients' requirements, they should play a useful role in ensuring they continue their rehabilitation exercises when they leave the premises!

Acute low back pain management education programme

ACC is working with the New Zealand College of Pharmacists to develop an education programme on managing acute low back pain.

The programme builds on the successful pharmacy-specific acute low back pain campaigns in 2005. Covering the latest best practice evidence, it aims to update community pharmacists on the screening tools to use and the advice to give to clients who present with acute low back pain.

Pharmacists will also be encouraged to refer formally those clients who they believe need GP help – using both existing tools and the new 'pharmacy referral to general practitioner' tools.

National trauma database to be implemented

ACC has embarked on a programme to implement a 'national trauma database' in association with district health boards (DHBs) and other health sector organisations.

A study of a similar concept in Australia has revealed that trauma data collection significantly improves the outcomes for major trauma patients and has the potential to improve outcome predictions for rehabilitation related to long-term injuries.

Under the New Zealand version, DHBs would capture specific information relating to major trauma cases, with the data being analysed to identify risk factors that negatively affect patient outcomes. The information could then be used to develop best practice treatment approaches for trauma patients, to help ensure early notification to ACC and to predict rehabilitation costs and outcomes.

Email newsletter for sensitive claims providers

A monthly electronic newsletter is available for counsellors treating claimants who have an accepted claim for a mental injury arising from a sexual abuse. These newsletters, published on www.acc.co.nz, offer counsellors possible solutions to some of the operational issues raised by providers, as well as advising relevant changes within the ACC.

To ensure you are on the list to receive the electronic link to these monthly newsletters, please email info-sensitive-claims@acc.co.nz with your current email address. Please be assured, this email list is private and will not be disclosed to external parties.

To help ACC keep provider details up-to-date, would you please also confirm your general contact details in the same email message, clearly stating which information can be included on the external ACC Counsellors list which is published on ACC's website.

Help from ACC is just a phone call away

- If you have a general query as a health professional, call the ACC Provider Helpline on 0800 222 070
- If you're a claimant, phone the Patient Helpline on 0800 101 996

- If you need information on sensitive and treatment injury claims, phone 0800 735 566
- If you're concerned about inappropriate or dishonest provider or claimant behaviour, phone in confidence 0800 372 830

Journeys from injury to recovery

In this issue of ACC News we continue our ‘personal journey’ stories of how ACC has helped claimants to recover from their injuries. Here’s the next in the series – Huia’s story...

A regular Saturday-morning basketball player, 26-year-old Huia landed hard after shooting a basket, causing severe pain in her knee. A friend called 111 and an ambulance took her to hospital.

An X-ray revealed that Huia’s knee ligament had torn but there were no broken bones. The hospital doctor registered her ACC claim, referred her to physiotherapy and gave her pain-relief medication, a leg brace and crutches for mobility. Once she was home again, ACC contacted her and, after assessing her needs, arranged home help, childcare for her two pre-school sons and taxi assistance to her physiotherapy sessions.

When Huia’s knee failed to recover as expected, her doctor referred her to an orthopaedic surgeon. ACC covered the cost of the subsequent MRI scan, surgery and hospital fees, as well as home help and childcare for eight weeks while she recovered. Now Huia’s back on her feet and playing basketball again – and says she’s shooting baskets better than ever!

How did ACC help?

HUIA’S NEEDS	ENTITLEMENTS	ACC’S CONTRIBUTION	HUIA’S CONTRIBUTION
Emergency transport to, and treatment in, hospital	Ambulance	\$470	Nil
	Accident and medical clinic services	\$220	Nil
	X-rays	\$53	\$22
	Prescription medication	\$30 (reimbursed)	Nil
Post-hospital rehabilitation	Crutches and leg brace	\$250	Nil
	Physiotherapy	\$490	Nil
	Transport to physiotherapy	\$480	Nil
	Childcare and home help (full time for about six weeks)	\$4,200	Nil
	Assessor	\$220	Nil
	Kitchen trolley	\$173	Nil
Specialist help and treatment	Specialist visits (initial and follow-up)	\$260	Nil
	MRI scan	\$740	Nil
	Surgery	\$4,673	Nil
Post-surgery rehabilitation	Help around the home	\$88	Nil
	Childcare and home help (full time for about eight weeks)	\$5,609	Nil
	Assessor	\$220	Nil
	Physiotherapy	\$888	Nil
	Transport to physiotherapy	\$960	Nil
	Crutches	\$50	Nil
	Prescription medication	\$30 (reimbursed)	Nil
Total costs		\$20,104	\$22

Use of ‘ACC surcharge’ terminology

It’s apparent on some practice signage and advertising, and anecdotally reported by patients, that a number of GP and physiotherapy practices are referring to their co-payments as ‘ACC surcharges’. Examples include advising patients that a co-payment is ‘the ACC surcharge’ and advertising that there is ‘No ACC surcharge for treatment’.

ACC views this practice as misleading, and asks all treatment providers to take responsibility for their charges and use the correct ‘co-payment’ term.