

The Therapist and Ethics

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AAMT has received quite a few complaints in the past few months. The cases have involved therapists who were accused of professional misconduct as the results of complaints by their patients to the police or to the Association.

Also, police have requested the help of the AAMT during the investigation of cases. For example, the police may need clarification of the exact hand placements for abdominal massage, the origins and insertions of certain muscles, the exact position of lymphatic vessels or the treatment of hip muscles.

Police inquiries and court proceedings are unpleasant affairs for therapists and their families and for anyone else involved in the process. They may drag on for many months and, in a couple of cases, for years.

Common to the cases recently notified to the AAMT are two significant factors; communication with the patient/client and the lack of or inappropriate use of towels. (draping the patient/client).

Any lack of professionalism, any neglect of basic procedures in these two areas of practice is a potent factor in what the patient perceives as professional misconduct. Get one or both of these wrong and the therapist increases their chance of a complaint brought against them. And therapists do get it wrong!

Some become careless and complacent. Some develop a false view of their responsibilities to their patients. Some get so isolated and out of touch that their standards can erode without notice.

It is the practitioner's responsibility to explain all aspects of examination and treatment to the patient and make sure that the patient understands everything that is involved and agrees to it;

Informed Consent. Keep the patient informed as the examination and treatment progresses. Failure to use towels, to drape appropriately, is a huge reason for concern amongst patients/clients and, often, the factor that leads them to complain about the way in which the therapist has treated them.

Always follow correct professional procedures with every patient and this must include unequivocal communications, informed consent, record keeping and use of towels.

AAMT is currently seeking advice from our solicitors as to mandatory reporting of any cases brought to our attention, especially those involving allegations of sexual assault and abuse. Members will be further advised of this in the near future.