

Advertising

Frequently Asked Questions

Introduction

This companion document to the *Standard of Practice on Advertising* has been developed to support registrants in gaining a clearer understanding and interpretation of the Standard. It is intended to be read alongside the Standard and is not designed to serve as a stand-alone document.

Frequently Asked Questions

QUESTION:

Why can't we use testimonials?

ANSWER:

Testimonials, in whatever format, are considered unreliable and cannot be verified. There is also a lack of balance as negative comments are rarely included. Finally, no one person's experience is the same, especially within the provision of healthcare.

QUESTION:

If I remove a client's name, does that mean it is no longer a testimonial?

ANSWER:

If a client, or relative, or friend of the client is providing a review about your service it is a testimonial and cannot be used in advertising, regardless of whether the client's name has been included or not. These reviews are still subjective, unreliable and cannot be verified.

WHAT CAN YOU SAY INSTEAD...

The advantages of choosing an audiologist/ speech-language pathologist are:

- Audiologists and speech-language pathologists are regulated.
- They hold a master's degree or a professional doctorate.
- They participate in continuing education.
- You can make a complaint if you are not happy with the care you have received.

QUESTION:

I understand that we cannot use testimonials on our website, but what about unsolicited reviews on social media sites? What should we do about those?

ANSWER:

While the use of social media can be an effective way to advertise your services, should you or your company use such sites, for example, Facebook, Instagram, etc. to advertise, it is your responsibility to monitor your site regularly and to remove any unsolicited client reviews or testimonials. If it comes to your attention that a client testimonial has been posted on a site you do not subscribe to, you should make best efforts to get the content removed where possible. You should not solicit testimonials.

WHAT CAN YOU DO INSTEAD....

If you are going to use social media in your advertising strategy, then you must monitor it on a regular basis and consider the following:

- Disable comments.
- Set your accounts to not allow tagging without your permission.
- If it comes to your attention that a testimonial has been inadvertently posted, un-tag it.
- Consider separate work social media accounts from your personal accounts.
- Be cautious about accepting “friend requests” from clients.

QUESTION:

A freelance Public Relations writer has been asked by an audiology clinic to write stories about clients with hearing loss to post on the clinic’s website. Is this allowed?

ANSWER:

Yes, this is allowed provided what is written is true, accurate, verifiable, and understandable to the intended audience. The content must be professional, appropriate, meet the standards of practice, and relate to the audiology scope of practice. It must not be misleading nor include the use of testimonials.

QUESTION:

Can I use written reviews from other people (i.e., not clients or clients’ relatives, in my advertising)?

ANSWER:

Using written reviews in advertising is prohibited.

QUESTION:

I understand the requirements regarding the use of testimonials and endorsements, but I work for a company whose owners and managers are not regulated health professionals. They tell me that they are trying to run a business in a competitive market and need to use these strategies in advertising. What should I do?

ANSWER:

While registrants may understand advertising restrictions, some are employed by companies who are not governed by the College’s regulations. When faced with a situation where an employer has advertised contrary to the *Standard of Practice* members are expected to notify their employer of the situation as soon as possible. Members should explain to their employer that advertisements cannot include testimonials nor endorsements as a result of specific direction from the College. Document these conversations. Show the employer the *Standard of Practice* found on the College website.

If these strategies are unproductive, call the Registrar to discuss your situation further.

QUESTION:

I have seen companies offer free products (often big-ticket items) or services – is this allowed?

ANSWER:

Many companies have chosen to offer “free” products or services to clients, should they make a purchase or book an appointment. While members can certainly engage in these programs, the

advertisements should not be misleading in their offer of “free” products. For example, if a company advertises a “buy one get one free” deal on hearing aids, the cost of the free hearing aid should not be hidden in the cost of the hearing aid purchased. As well, the cost of the service should not be hidden in any subsequent purchases made by the client. Not only is this misleading to the public, and contrary to the *Standard of Practice*, such an advertisement would also conflict with the College’s Code of Ethics. Registered members are discouraged from being influenced by considerations other than what is in the client’s best interest and to ensure that clients are making informed choices based solely upon their health care needs.

QUESTION:

Can I advertise a therapy product or app on my website that I developed? I will receive money from the sale.

ANSWER:

Yes, as long as you declare any conflict of interest such as benefits, including financial, you may receive as a result of the sale.

QUESTION:

Can I advertise that my practice is restricted to a certain area of practice?

ANSWER:

Yes, you can advertise that your practice is restricted to a certain area of practice, as long as you do not hold yourself out to be an ‘expert’ in an area. You can advertise that you practice in certain areas, such as childhood apraxia of speech, voice, tinnitus, stuttering, if it is factual and true. You can state that you have advanced training in a certain area or that your clinic focuses in a certain area, but you cannot say you are an expert in any area.

QUESTION:

I have recently joined a website to promote my private practice. In order to post my business on this site, I have to offer a promotion. Am I able to offer \$20 off the first therapy visit?

ANSWER:

Yes, you are allowed to offer a promotion as long as you do not try and recoup the money by inflating the price of your services elsewhere. As with the offer of free products you are required to practice according to the College’s Code of Ethics and be “honourable and truthful in your professional relationships”.