Guideline for self-treatment and treating relatives

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Summary: **The Council has endorsed a set of principles of best practice in relation to Medical Practitioners treating their relatives or themselves.**

Applies to:	Registered Medical Practitioners practising in NSW
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Owner:	Medical Council of NSW
Related legislation, Awards, Policy and Agreements:	
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BACKGROUND

The Medical Council of New South Wales is of the view that wherever possible, medical practitioners should avoid treating members of their immediate family, because in these circumstances:

- Professional objectivity may be compromised and their judgment may be influenced by the nature of their relationship with the patient;
- Medical practitioners may fail to explore sensitive areas when taking a medical history or may fail to perform an appropriate physical examination;
- The patient may feel uncomfortable disclosing sensitive information or undergoing a physical examination when the medical practitioner is a family member;
- Patient autonomy may be compromised when a medical practitioner treats a member of their family;
- The principles of informed consent may not be adhered to when a medical practitioner treats a member of their family.

The Council is also of the view that **all** medical practitioners should have their own, independent General Practitioner and should not initiate treatment for themselves.

GUIDELINE

The Council endorses the following general principles:

1 All medical practitioners should have their own, independent General Practitioner.

2 It is not advisable for medical practitioners to initiate treatment (including prescribing) for themselves or immediate family members.

3 In emergency situations or isolated settings where there is no help available, medical practitioners may treat themselves or family members until another medical practitioner becomes available.

4 It is not advisable for medical practitioners to serve as primary or regular care providers for immediate family members, although there are circumstances in which they may work together with an independent medical practitioner to maintain established treatment.

5 It is not advisable for medical practitioners to issue medical certificates for themselves or members of their family.

6 It is not appropriate for medical practitioners to issue death certificates for members of their family.

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