

Overview of Allied Health Professions

Northern Queensland Primary Health Network

Torres and Cape | Cairns | Townsville | Mackay





*Northern Queensland Primary Health Network (NQPHN)
acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of the lands and
seas on which we live and work, and pay our respects to
Elders past and present.*



Chiropractor

What is Chiropractic?

Chiropractic is a healthcare profession focused on the skilled assessment, diagnosis, treatment, and prevention of neuromusculoskeletal problems.

Chiropractors work with people who present with a range of conditions such as neck pain, back pain, headache, whiplash, strains and sprains, overuse injuries, and work and sports injuries. Chiropractors employ various manual therapy techniques, offer advice on self-management and activity modification and prescribe exercises, all of which are supported by the evidence as a best-practice first-line approach to patient care.

When should I refer to a Chiropractor?

People presenting with musculoskeletal pain, especially spinal pain, will benefit from consulting a chiropractor as a first point of contact within the healthcare system. Chiropractors are primary contact practitioners based mainly within the community, and access does not require a medical referral (except for Chronic Disease Management Plans under Medicare and Veterans under DVA).

What do Chiropractors do?

Most people visit chiropractors to manage spinal pain. However, chiropractors are also skilled in diagnosing and managing extremity conditions, such as those affecting shoulders, hips, and knees. Chiropractors employ a person-centred approach, using non-pharmacological methods like manual therapy, exercise-based rehabilitation, and lifestyle advice to help patients achieve their goals and optimise clinical outcomes.

How are Chiropractors qualified?

To practice as a registered chiropractor, practitioners must:

- Complete a five-year recognised university program and register with the Australian Health Practitioners Regulation Agency.
- Complete a minimum of 20 hours per year of continuing professional development.
- Adhere to the Chiropractic Board of Australia's Code of Conduct, Registration Standards and Guidelines.
- Comply with audit requirements.

Tools and resources

1	Find a practitioner here. This page offers a searchable directory, intended to help you find chiropractors near you.	Chiropractic Australia
2	Find out more about chiropractic here. This website provides more detailed information about evidence-informed chiropractic in Australia.	Chiropractic Australia

Counsellor and Psychotherapist

What is Counselling and Psychotherapy?

Registered Counsellors and Psychotherapists work with clients to benefit their mental health and wellbeing. They use a range of interventions including talking therapies as well as creative and experiential therapies (art, music, dance, eco and animal therapies) to build a positive therapeutic relationship which supports self-awareness and resolves identified concerns. Counselling and psychotherapy are highly effective therapeutic services backed by evidence.

When should I refer to a Counsellor or Psychotherapist?

Registered Counsellors and Psychotherapists work in a wide range of settings including primary care, private practice, in schools and hospitals and in a range of service providers including Employee Assistance Programs, crisis services, welfare agencies and government services. Registered Counsellors and Psychotherapists are highly skilled members of multi-disciplinary teams alongside other allied health professionals.

What do Counsellors and Psychotherapists do?

Registered Counsellors and Psychotherapists work with individuals, families and groups to provide therapeutic support in a range of settings. This support includes a range of assessments and therapeutic interventions tailored to the client's needs.

How are Counsellors and Psychotherapists qualified?

To practice as a Registered Clinical Counsellor or Psychotherapist, or Certified Practising Counsellor with PACFA, practitioners must complete accredited training and meet PACFA certification requirements including annual CPD and supervision requirements, completing a criminal history check and adhering to PACFA's Code of Ethics. In addition:

- Registered Clinical Counsellors must have completed 750 hours of client contact and 75 hours of supervision over at least two years.
- Registered Clinical Psychotherapists must complete psychotherapy modality training as well as personal therapy and psychotherapy supervision.
- College of Relationship Counselling members must have additional relationship therapy training as well as relevant supervision.
- College of Creative & Experiential Therapy members must meet training requirements in creative or experiential therapy.

Tools and resources

1	Find a practitioner here. This page offers a searchable directory, intended to help you find Counsellors and Psychotherapists near you.	PACFA
2	Find out more about Counselling and Psychotherapy here. This website provides more detailed information about Counselling and Psychotherapy services.	PACFA

Creative Arts Therapist

What is Creative Arts Therapy?

Creative Arts Therapists help clients to reduce anxiety, improve self-awareness and find new pathways to healing. They use creative processes to help clients explore feelings that may be hard to put into words. They work with a wide variety of clients including young children, people experiencing mental health issues, those experiencing cognitive and neurological conditions such as stroke and dementia, and people in palliative care.

When should I refer to a Creative Arts Therapist?

Clients are usually referred when traditional 'talk' based psychological interventions are less successful. Creative arts-based interventions can be particularly beneficial for people with autism, those that have experienced a stroke, have dementia, or who have difficulties with language or any other reasons for needing a creative means of expressing and dealing with mental ill-health.

What do Creative Arts Therapists do?

Creative Arts Therapy is an experiential psychotherapeutic approach offered by qualified practitioners utilising a range of creative modalities. It is holistic and client led with a focus on attending to emotional, cognitive, physical and spiritual well-being. The creative arts approach aligns well with indigenous and non-indigenous models of health and well-being. Creative Arts Therapists draw on the principles of psychotherapy through art-based modalities, allowing people to express themselves in ways that might be difficult through words alone.

How are Creative Arts Therapists qualified?

To qualify and practice as an ANZACATA registered practising member, practitioners must demonstrate that they have attained recognised qualifications from an accredited course at AQF level 7 (Bachelors Degree) and above in creative arts therapy.

The vast majority of ANZACATA practising members have a specific Masters degree in Creative Arts therapy which includes 750 hours of supervised clinical placement (AQF 9). They must abide by the ANZACATA Code of Ethics and must also demonstrate that they have undertaken 25 hours of CPD annually and participate in ongoing clinical supervision.

Tools and resources

1	Find a practitioner here. This page offers a searchable directory, intended to help you find Master trained Creative Arts Therapists near you.	ANZACATA
2	Find out more about Creative Arts Therapy here. This website provides more detailed information about Creative Art Therapy services, including the work of practising members and when to refer, as well as verified and evidence-based information about the profession.	ANZACATA

Dietitian

What is Dietetics?

Dietitians are experts in food and nutrition. They provide guidance about how to appropriately manage diets and nutrition for people who may be affected by health conditions such as diabetes, cancer, heart disease, renal disease, gastro-intestinal diseases, mental health conditions, food allergies, and other health concerns. A dietitian can help people maintain their health and reduce their risk of developing chronic disease.

When should I refer to a Dietitian?

There are a wide range of triggers that may lead to a person benefiting from the support of a dietitian. Some typical reasons why someone might be referred, or might independently choose, to see a dietitian include:

- A newly diagnosed chronic condition
- Signs that a chronic illness is not being managed (e.g., high Hba1c levels)
- Significant weight change
- Recent poor food intake, poor appetite, or difficulty preparing or eating food
- Changes in medication
- Periodic reviews of medical nutrition therapy.

What do Dietitians do?

Dietitians in primary care typically focus on medical nutrition therapy – working with patients to assess their health and nutritional needs and to assist them to manage their medical condition(s) and symptoms via the use of a specifically tailored diet. Medical nutrition therapy may also involve enteral nutrition provision, monitoring and evaluation for a wide range of conditions. Outside of primary care, dietitians also work across a wide spectrum of settings, including academia, food service management, sports nutrition, community and public health nutrition.

How are Dietitians qualified?

To practice as an Accredited Practising Dietitian, dietitians must:

- Complete a Bachelor or Master's Level dietetic qualification accredited by Dietitians Australia
- Complete a minimum of 30 hours per year of continuing professional development
- Adhere to the Dietitians Australia Code of Practice for Dietitians and Nutritionists
- Comply with audit requirements.

Please note that Accredited Practising Dietitians also practice nutrition health science, but nutritionists are not dietitians. Or simply put, all dietitians are nutritionists, but nutritionists without a dietetics qualification can't call themselves a dietitian.

Tools and resources

1	Find a practitioner here. This page offers a searchable directory, intended to help you find dietitians near you.	Dietitians Australia
2	Find out more about dietetics here. This website provides more detailed information about the work of dietitians and when to refer, as well as verified and evidence-based information about diet and nutrition.	Dietitians Australia

Diabetes Educator

What is Diabetes Education?

A Credentialed Diabetes Educator (CDE) is an expert in diabetes education and management. CDEs support people to self-manage their diabetes through lifestyle modifications and proper medication use. CDEs tailor education and clinical advice to each individual's situation, culture, and stage in their diabetes journey. CDEs provide in-depth knowledge across all areas of diabetes care and management to ensure comprehensive and personalised support. CDEs can help reduce the risk of diabetes-related complications.

When should I refer to a Diabetes Educators?

Any person diagnosed with any type of diabetes, pre-diabetes or at high risk of developing diabetes should be referred to a CDE. People living with diabetes should see a CDE at least annually and up to five times a year if they are at high risk of developing complications.

What do Diabetes Educators do?

CDEs educate people on their condition, including potential complications and its relationship with other health issues. CDEs offer advice and support for lifestyle changes that promote effective diabetes management and provide guidance on medication safety, including the use of insulin therapy, proper injection techniques, and checking injection sites. They educate patients on how to choose and use diabetes technology and self-monitor blood glucose levels, including proper technique and interpretation of results. CDEs encourage collaboration among the multidisciplinary diabetes care team.

How are Diabetes Educators qualified?

To qualify and practice as a Diabetes Educator, practitioners must:

- Complete a qualification in one of nine approved background professions
- Complete a graduate certificate in diabetes management,
- Meet the requirements of the Australian Diabetes Educators (ADEA) credentialling process
- Maintain certification with ADEA.

CDEs may have specialised areas of practice such as, diabetes in pregnancy, paediatrics, or technology. Please note that some practitioners may call themselves diabetes educators, without being credentialed. Only CDEs credentialed by ADEA are eligible for Medicare and other government funding.

Tools and resources

1	Find a CDE here. This page offers a searchable directory intended to help you find CDEs near you.	Australian Diabetes Educators Association
2	Find out more here. This website provides more detailed information about CDE services, including the diabetes referral pathways website that may be relevant to all health professionals.	Australian Diabetes Educators Association

Exercise Physiologist

What is an Exercise Physiologist?

Accredited Exercise Physiologists (AEPs) are university-qualified allied health professionals equipped with the knowledge, skills, and abilities to prescribe, deliver, adapt, and evaluate safe and effective movement, physical activity, and exercise-based interventions to facilitate and optimise health status, function, recovery, independence, and participation in activities across the lifespan, including at home, school, work, and in the community.

When should I refer to an Exercise Physiologist?

AEPs are experts in clinical exercise assessment, prescription and delivery. Some of the reasons you might refer to an AEP may include:

- To improve and manage health conditions or injuries
- To improve and manage mental health conditions and associated comorbidities
- To manage and overcome persisting pain
- To improve heart health or rehabilitate after a cardiac event
- To improve recovery and manage symptoms during and after cancer treatment.

What do Exercise Physiologist's do?

AEPs practice according to evidence-based models of care, which consider the whole person and factors that influence their health and well-being, and ability to function and participate at home, school, work, and in the community. AEPs screen and assess for these factors to identify client needs, preferences, barriers, and facilitators to inform recommendations and interventions. This includes but is not limited to; biopsychosocial factors, value-based care principles, person-centred care, and social and cultural determinants of health.

How are Exercise Physiologists qualified?

To practice as an AEP, practitioners must:

- Complete an Exercise and Sport Science Australia (ESSA)-accredited Exercise Physiology course
- Hold Accreditation as an Accredited Exercise Physiologist (AEP) with ESSA
- Uphold the ESSA Code of Professional Conduct and Ethical Practice
- Complete an annual continuing professional development program accruing 20 points per annum
- Hold and maintain a valid first aid and CPR certificate
- Hold and maintain appropriate professional indemnity insurance
- Meet Recency of Practice requirements.

Tools and resources

1	Find an AEP here. This page offers a searchable directory, intended to help you find an AEP near you.	Exercise and Sport Science Australia
2	Find out more about AEPs here. This website provides information on the benefits of seeing an AEP, educational content for referrers and fact sheets for clients and professionals.	Exercise Right by Exercise and Sport Science Australia

Hand Therapist

What is Hand Therapy?

Accredited hand therapists (AHTs) are experts in the rehabilitation of finger, hand, wrist and upper limb.

When should I refer to an Accredited Hand Therapist?

There are a wide range of triggers that may lead to a person benefiting from the support of a hand therapist. Some typical reasons why someone might be referred by a GP, surgeon, or allied health practitioner include:

- Trauma to the finger, hand, wrist, elbow, shoulder or upper limb from a workplace, sporting, recreational or driving injury
- Pain from a condition such as arthritis, tennis elbow or overuse, for example, rock climbers, musicians, golfers.
- Reduced function.

What do Accredited Hand Therapists do?

Accredited Hand Therapists see patients of all ages. They treat trauma, injuries, and conditions affecting joints, tendons, muscles, and nerves, including ligament sprains, inflamed tendons, broken bones, and damaged nerves. They also treat pain and arthritis and manage post-operative wounds, scars, and swelling.

Accredited Hand Therapists specialise in custom-made thermoplastic orthoses (or splints) to rest and protect an injury in the long and short term. These may be small splints for the finger or thumb or larger for the wrist or arm. They prescribe rehabilitation exercises that improve range of motion, strength and function.

How are Accredited Hand Therapists qualified?

To qualify and practice as an Australian Accredited Hand Therapist, practitioners must be qualified as an occupational therapist or physiotherapist and registered with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra).

An Accredited Hand Therapist is a person who:

- is an AHPRA* registered Occupational Therapist or Physiotherapist and has demonstrated an advanced level of competence in hand therapy
- has undertaken over 300 hours of advanced upper-limb education and assessment, a one-year mentorship, and has a minimum of 3600 hours in hand therapy clinical practice
- has been assessed as qualified and competent to provide safe, evidence-based diagnosis, advice and treatment
- is awarded the credential of Accredited Hand Therapist by the Australian Hand Therapy Association Credentialing Council.

Tools and resources

1	Find a practitioner here. This page offers a searchable directory, intended to help you find hand therapists near you.	Australian Hand Therapy Association
2	Find out more about hand therapy here. These pages provide information about hand therapy and common injuries and conditions.	Australian Hand Therapy Association

Medical Radiation Scientist

What is Medical Radiation Science?

Medical radiation science is the umbrella term for a range of disciplines in the field of diagnostic/medical imaging (X-ray, CT, MRI, Ultrasound etc), radiation therapy for cancer treatment and nuclear medicine for both diagnostic and treatment of cancers.

When should I refer to a Medical Radiation Practitioner?

Appointments and treatment by MRPs is generally done by referral from a medical specialist such as a general practitioner, orthopedic surgeon, oncologist, or doctor in an emergency department. MRPs assist with the diagnostic imaging needs associated with diagnosis of medical conditions, evaluation of symptoms, pre-surgical planning, monitoring and follow-up after treatment, as well as screening programs to identify conditions such as breast cancer.

What do Medical Radiation Practitioners do?

Diagnostic/medical imaging professionals work to obtain the most accurate image of the affected body area for evaluation and treatment purposes using a range of highly sophisticated hard and software. Radiation therapists work with radiation oncologists to deliver highly targeted treatment to the affected area.

How are medical radiation practitioners qualified?

To qualify and practice as a medical radiation practitioner, practitioners must complete either a 4 year undergraduate degree or a two year post graduate Masters in Medical Radiation Science. Membership of the peak body for Medical Radiation Practitioners, the Australian Society of Medical Imaging and Radiation Therapy (ASMIRT) is highly recommended and available to students at no cost.

Once qualified, practitioners must register with the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra) and obtain a radiation license from the relevant authority in their state. Practitioners must complete ongoing continuing professional development requirements and adhere to all standards to maintain registration.

Tools and resources

1	Find out more about Medical Radiation Science here. This website provides more detailed information about the highly specialised profession of medical radiation science services including resources for practitioners.	Australian Society of Medical Imaging and Radiation Therapy
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Music Therapist

What is Music Therapy?

Registered Music Therapists (RMTs) have specialist expertise in using music to improve health, functioning and wellbeing. RMTs use a range of therapeutic music techniques to achieve individual patient goals.

When should I refer to a Music Therapist?

There are a wide range of reasons to seek services from a Registered Music Therapist:

- Developmental delays: improving communication, physical, cognition, behavioural and social skills and function
- Mental ill health: reducing and managing symptoms, providing supportive therapies
- Grief and loss: associated with bereavement, adjustment to disability, trauma
- Pain management support for people living with chronic or cancer pain
- Chronic conditions: promoting self-management and improving function
- Dementia: supporting people experiencing behavioural and psychological symptoms, and their carers
- Neuromuscular and neurodegenerative conditions: improving function and mental health
- End of life: psychological therapies for people at end of life and their carers.
- RMTs also work with groups and communities to reduce loneliness and isolation and improve social connection and inclusion.

What do Music Therapists do?

RMTs use music-based interventions to address a range of goals determined through a patient-centred assessment. Music therapy can help address a range of mental, physical, communication, cognitive, emotional or social goals. Interventions may include singing, song writing, musical improvisation, receptive music listening, psychological therapies and other speciality techniques.

How are Music Therapists qualified?

To qualify and practice as a Registered Music Therapist (RMT), practitioners must:

- Complete a Bachelor or Master's degree accredited by the Australian Music Therapy Association (AMTA)
- Maintain registration with AMTA
- Engage in continuing professional development set by AMTA
- Adhere to the Code of Professional Conduct for Music Therapists, Standards of Practice and By Laws for Complaints and Disciplinary Procedures.

Registered Music Therapists are NASRHP-regulated health professionals.

Tools and resources

1	Find a practitioner here. This page offers a searchable directory, intended to help you find music therapists near you.	Australian Music Therapy Association
2	Find out more about music therapy here. This website provides more detailed information about music therapy, who to refer, fact sheets and evidence summaries and information about the profession.	Australian Music Therapy Association

Nutritionist

What is a Nutritionist?

Certified Practicing Nutritionist (CPNs) are clinically trained, degree qualified allied health professionals who practice Clinical Nutrition (also termed Nutritional Medicine). They have an independent nutritional medicine prescribing and compounding capacity underpinned by Section 42AA of the Therapeutic Goods Act and Schedule 5 Item 8 of its rules.

When should I refer to a Nutritionist?

There are many reasons why a person may benefit from consulting a CPN. CPNs focus on maintaining health and addressing the metabolic dysfunctions that drive common health issues and chronic disease states. For example, while a CPN does not directly treat cardiovascular disease, they can support cardiovascular health by addressing underlying metabolic factors, such as inflammation and insulin resistance. CPNs are trained to apply nutritional support in a range of areas including: cardiovascular health, metabolic health such as diabetes, endocrine health, immunological health, gastrointestinal health, musculoskeletal health, nervous system support, skin health, food intolerances, environmental sensitivities and physical performance.

What do Nutritionists do?

CPNs work with patients to assess their health and nutritional needs to support good health and support the remediation of disease states by using dietary modification therapy (within a nutritional medicine paradigm) and the personalised prescribing of dietary supplements for both nutrient repletion and complex nutritional medicine purposes. Outside of private practice primary care, CPNs also work in research, teaching, community and public health nutrition.

How are Nutritionists qualified?

To qualify and practice as a CPN, practitioners must complete a minimum of an AARPN accredited clinical degree program in Clinical Nutrition/Nutritional Medicine and be credentialled as a CPN by AARPN. Ongoing CPN credentialling is dependent on continuing association membership, ethics and code of conduct compliance, meeting annual CPD requirements, and currency of professional insurances, first aid, and clearances. Training includes:

- Extensive clinical practicum in Clinical Nutrition/Nutritional Medicine
- Nutritional biochemistry, pharmacology, counselling, and dietary therapy
- Clinical examination, pathophysiology, and functional pathology
- Clinical case formulation and personalised Nutritional Medicine prescribing
- Research methods/nutritional epidemiology, and Public Health Nutrition.

Tools and resources

1	Find a practitioner here. This page offers a service intended to help you find Certified Practicing Nutritionists near you.	AARPN
2	Find out more about Certified Practicing Nutritionists here. This website provides more detailed information about Certified Practicing Nutritionist services, professional competencies, regulation and funding.	AARPN

Occupational Therapist

What is Occupational Therapy?

Occupational therapy is a client-centred allied health profession focussed on promoting health and wellbeing through 'occupation' (everyday activities). Occupational therapists support individuals, groups and communities to participate in the everyday activities (occupations) that are most meaningful to them. Occupational therapy considers all aspects of the person, the activity, and the environment that may be impacting upon participation.

When should I refer to an Occupational Therapist?

Occupational therapists support people across the lifespan whenever there is an impact on the person's performance of important everyday activities (occupations) due to developmental delay, disability, ill health, injury, mental ill health, the effects of ageing, or other impairment. For example: when daily activities are impacted by physical, cognitive, or mental health issues, after a life-altering event like injury, illness, or surgery, for children with developmental, learning, or social concerns, to support aging in place or adapt to changes in mobility, behaviour or cognition or to adapt or adjust to life or role changes.

What do Occupational Therapists do?

Occupational therapists work with people to enhance their ability to engage in the occupations they want to, need to, or are expected to do, such as self-care activities including showering, dressing, preparing food; productive activities such as education, work, volunteering and caring for others; and leisure/social activities, such as being part of a community group, engaging in a hobby, and being part of a friendship group.

Occupational therapists may address barriers related to the person or modify the activity or the environment to better support their participation. Occupational Therapists work collaboratively with individuals, families, caregivers and another health professionals to offer individualised, client-centred care.

How are Occupational Therapists qualified?

To qualify and practice as an Occupational Therapist practitioners must:

- Complete a recognised undergraduate or masters level course in occupational therapy
- Meet national regulation requirements as set out by the Occupational Therapy Board of Australia for AHPRA
- Undertake a minimum of 20 hours of Continuing Professional Development each year;
- Adhere to the Occupational Therapy Board of Australia [Australian Occupational Therapy Competency Standards](#) and the [OTA Code of Ethics](#).

Occupational therapists can also obtain:

- OTA Mental Health Endorsement which enables practice under the following schemes:
 - Medicare Better Access to Mental Health initiative
 - Medicare Eating disorder treatment and management plan program
 - Department of Veteran's Affairs (DVA) mental health programs
- Registrations to practice under various state and Government schemes including Medicare, NDIS, and state and territory compensation schemes.

Tools and resources

1	Find a practitioner here. This page offers a searchable directory, intended to help you find occupational therapists near you.	Occupational Therapy Australia
2	Find out more about Occupational Therapy here. This website provides more detailed information about the occupational therapy profession and services in Australia.	Occupational Therapy Australia

Optometrist

What is Optometry?

Optometrists are the principal providers of primary eye health and vision care in Australia. Optometrists mainly work in community practice settings however optometric services also provided in some public hospitals, First Nations health settings, Universities, Ophthalmology practices, Aged Care facilities and Low Vision Clinics.

When should I refer to an Optometrist?

A referral to an optometrist should be considered or initiated if a patient:

- Reports any acute or chronic eye or vision symptoms or problems
- Has a systemic condition with known ocular complications (e.g. Diabetes)
- Is taking a medication with known ocular side effects (e.g. Plaquenil)
- Has a family history of eye disease
- Has not had regular routine eye examinations (many eye diseases are asymptomatic including in children with early detection critical to avoiding vision loss).

Referrals are not required for an optometric examination to qualify for a Medicare subsidy but do assist the optometrist in identify the reason for the referral, the nature of the assessment required, and supporting patient compliance.

What do Optometrists do?

Optometrists main work is in the prevention, diagnosis and treatment of both acute and chronic eye and vision problems. Optometric examination can also however play a key role in the detection and monitoring of some systemic conditions and side effects from their treatment. Optometrists can prescribe topical medicines and optical devices and refer directly to ophthalmology for surgical and other medical treatment if required.

How are Optometrists qualified?

To qualify and practice as an Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra) registered optometrist requires that practitioners:

- Complete an approved university program (currently available as a post graduate qualification in Australia)
- Undertake a minimum of 20 hours of Continuing Professional Development annually
- Maintaining recency of practice and compliance with national codes and guidelines.

Tools and resources

1	Find a practitioner here. This page offers a searchable directory, intended to help you find Optometrists near you.	Optometry Australia
2	Find out more about Optometry here. This website provides more detailed information about Optometry in Australia from the peak body that represents 85% of the profession.	Optometry Australia

Orthoptist

What is Orthoptics?

Orthoptists are eye therapists who assess, diagnose and manage eye conditions. Orthoptists have expertise in visual assessment for children, those with poor vision, and those who have had stroke or brain injury.

When should I refer to an Orthoptist?

Orthoptists typically assist with addressing symptoms of eye strain or visual discomfort, suspected disorders of binocular vision or eye movement and visual difficulties occurring following stroke, brain injury or concussion and other neurological conditions. Orthoptists also undertake comprehensive visual assessment for infants and children as well as specialised visual assessment procedures for driving and for screening and monitoring ocular pathologies including, glaucoma, diabetic eye disease, macular degeneration and other chronic eye conditions.

What do orthoptists do?

Orthoptists in primary care settings diagnose and manage eye movement and binocular vision disorders. They prescribe orthoptics, eye exercises and other non-surgical management for ocular conditions. For individuals with central or peripheral visual impairment, an orthoptist can provide low vision rehabilitation including, prescription of visual aids to optimise visual function and improve quality of life. Orthoptists have expertise in vision assessment for children and often support delivery of vision screening programs.

Orthoptists may also work alongside ophthalmologists in secondary and tertiary settings, performing specialised assessments of visual function and diagnostic testing to screen, triage, diagnose, monitor and manage ocular diseases and provide pre-, peri- and post-operative care, education, health promotion and support for those with ocular conditions.

How are Orthoptists qualified?

To practice as an orthoptist, a Bachelor or Master qualification in orthoptics must be completed (Australian Quality Framework (AQF) level 7 or higher). Orthoptists are self-regulated through the Australian Orthoptic Board (AOB) and an application to register requires a degree in orthoptics from one of the recognised Australian university degrees or international equivalent. Registration with the AOB requires regular completion of endorsed continuing professional development activities.

Registration is required to perform some specialised skills including, ocular ultrasonography and prescription of glasses. In addition to AOB registration, orthoptists require membership of the professional association, Orthoptics Australia to access Medicare, NDIS and other funding.

Tools and resources

1	Find out more about Orthoptics here. This page provides information about the work of orthoptists and resources for practitioners.	Orthoptics Australia
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Orthotist and Prosthetist

What is Orthotics and Prosthetics?

Orthotist/prosthetists assess and treat the physical and functional limitations of people resulting from illnesses and disabilities. Orthotist/prosthetists are trained to prescribe, design, fit and monitor orthoses and prostheses.

An orthosis is an externally applied device designed to control biomechanical alignment, support an injury, assist rehabilitation, reduce pain, or increase mobility /independence. A prosthesis is an artificial device attached or applied to the body to replace a missing part.

When should I refer to an Orthotist/Prosthetist?

There are several reasons why people may be referred to or choose to see an orthotist/prosthetists, these include:

- To reduce pain using an orthosis, e.g. knee orthosis for arthritis
- Immobilise or support an area with the goal to aid healing, e.g. total contact casting for diabetic foot disease Prevent the progression of a disease or condition, e.g. orthotic therapy for scoliosis
- Improve mobility using an orthosis or prosthesis
- Increase functional capacity using an orthosis or prosthesis.

What do Orthotist/Prosthetists do?

- Assesses clients' functional potential in their home, leisure, work and school environments, and recommends appropriate assistive technology
- Designs, prescribes and fits orthoses and prostheses
- Provides gait training, education, and continually monitors, assesses and evaluates orthoses and prostheses and treatments.
- Adjusts and modifies orthoses and prostheses.

How are Orthotist/Prosthetists qualified?

To qualify and practice as a certified orthotist/prosthetist, practitioners must:

- Complete a recognised Bachelor or Master's Level orthotic/prosthetic qualification
- Complete a minimum of 30 hours per year of continuing professional development
- Adhere to the AOPA Ethical Code and Professional Conduct
- Comply with audit requirements.

Note: practitioners may choose to specialise in orthotics or prosthetics or both orthotics and prosthetics. All certified practitioners are recognised as certified orthotist/prosthetists.

Tools and resources

1	Find a practitioner here. This page offers a searchable directory, intended to help you find orthotist/prosthetists near you.	Australian Orthotic Prosthetic Association
2	Find out more about orthotics and prosthetics here. This website provides more detailed information about orthotic and prosthetic services including information on orthoses and prostheses, clinical factsheets and orthotist/prosthetist scope of practice.	Australian Orthotic Prosthetic Association

Osteopath

What is Osteopathy?

Osteopaths are musculoskeletal allied health professionals whose practice is underpinned by a biopsychosocial approach. They use a combination of traditional and modern evidence-based healthcare philosophies. Their practice generally involves non-invasive therapies such as muscle soft-tissue work, joint mobilisation or manipulation, stretching and exercise prescription as well as education and advice to support the body's natural healing processes.

When should I refer to an osteopath?

There are many reasons to refer to an osteopath, such as when a muscular issue impacts the person's ability to manage day-to-day activities. Some typical situations for when to refer to an osteopath include:

- Assessment and management of neuromusculoskeletal injuries and their functional impact
- Advice on posture, positioning, improving body alignment, physical strength and conditioning
- Developmental and milestone checks in children
- Strengthening the structure of women's bodies pre- and post-childbirth
- Functional capacity assessment of injured workers for return-to-work planning.

What do osteopaths do?

Osteopaths provide musculoskeletal and nervous system assessments, manual therapy, clinical exercise programs, movement, postural and positioning advice and ergonomic assessments as well as therapeutic needling techniques, such as dry needling, trigger point therapy or acupuncture. They may also offer ongoing support and educational advice about lifestyle, stress management, diet, or other factors that may influence a person's pain, injury or movement.

How are osteopaths qualified?

To qualify and practice as a registered osteopath, practitioners must:

- Complete a dual Bachelor or Bachelor/Masters qualification.
- Register with the Osteopathic Board of Australia and adhere to the registration standards and Codes of Conduct.
- Complete a minimum of 25 hours per year of continuing professional development.
- Comply with audit requirements.

Osteopaths who have undertaken additional tertiary qualifications and can demonstrate sustained, committed practice within a particular focus area can qualify as an Advanced Practitioner through further assessment.

Tools and resources

1	Find an Osteopath here. This page offers a searchable directory, intended to help you find osteopaths near you.	Osteopathy Australia
2	Find out more about Osteopathy here. This website provides more detailed information about osteopathic services, including what schemes osteopaths can work within and how osteopaths can help different demographics and complaints.	Osteopathy Australia

Pharmacist

What is a pharmacist?

Pharmacists are experts on medicines and health. They support access to medicines across Australia and provide guidance on the safe and quality use of medicines to optimise health outcomes in both acute illness and chronic health conditions. They also play an important role in preventive health care (e.g. by administering vaccines) in the community to reduce people's lifetime risk of developing chronic disease.

When should I refer to a pharmacist?

A wide range of triggers may lead to a person benefiting from the support of a pharmacist. Some typical reasons why someone might be referred, or might independently choose, to see a pharmacist include:

- Counselling on the role of medicines and advice in relation to administration methods, potential side effects, drug interactions, safe storage and disposal
- Support with timely access to medicines and prescription management
- Assistance with medication adherence, such as by means of a dose administration aid, staged supply or home delivery.

What do pharmacists do?

Pharmacists provide medicines expertise in a wide range of practice settings such as community pharmacy, hospital, residential care homes, General Practice clinics and Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health services. Some pharmacists are credentialed to provide Home Medicines Reviews, conducted within a patient's own home upon referral from their doctor or specialist.

Pharmacists are key members of interdisciplinary healthcare teams and should be present wherever medicines are prescribed, dispensed, administered or reviewed.

How are pharmacists qualified?

To qualify and practice as a pharmacist, practitioners must:

- Complete an accredited university degree (Bachelor of Pharmacy or Master of Pharmacy), an intern training program with supervised practice requirements, and pass a registration exam
- Meet recency of practice requirements and attain a minimum of 40 continuing professional development credits each year
- Adhere to the Pharmaceutical Society of Australia's Professional Practice Standards and the National Board's Shared Code of Conduct.

Tools and resources

1	Find a practitioner here. This page offers a searchable national directory, intended to help you find credentialed pharmacists near you.	Pharmaceutical Society of Australia
2	Find out more about pharmacists here. This website provides more detailed information about pharmacy services, including information on the evolving role of pharmacists, as well as resources for pharmacists.	Pharmaceutical Society of Australia

Physiotherapist

What is Physiotherapy?

Physiotherapists are experts in the structure of the human body and its movement. They work with people of all ages to treat a broad range of health conditions including sports injuries and musculoskeletal conditions as well as chronic health conditions such as chronic pain, osteoarthritis, disability and neurological conditions such as stroke.

When should I refer to a physiotherapist?

Common situations where the input of a physiotherapist is sought includes:

- When someone is suffering from ongoing pain
- Following a flare up of a respiratory condition
- Following an injury at work
- On discharge from hospital to regain strength, mobility and function
- When children aren't meeting their developmental milestones
- To improve balance and prevent falls.

What do Physiotherapists do?

Physiotherapists assess, diagnose, triage and treat patients across:

- Musculoskeletal and pain conditions, injuries and impairments
- Neurological conditions such as stroke
- Cardiovascular and respiratory conditions, including exercise prescription, respiratory therapy and airway clearance techniques.
- Pelvic health issues across all stages in life, including continence, pelvic pain, post-surgical conditions, post-birth trauma and reproductive and sexual health
- Paediatric conditions from neonatal to teenage years including developmental delay, neurological conditions and musculoskeletal injury and disease
- Aged care and gerontology conditions such as falls and balance issues to frailty, musculoskeletal and neurological conditions, and continence concerns.

How are physiotherapists qualified?

To practice as a registered physiotherapist and to use the protected titles of physiotherapist and physical therapist, practitioners must:

- Complete a recognised Bachelor, Masters or professional doctorate program
- Registered with the Physiotherapy Board of Australia
- Complete a minimum of 20 hours of continuing professional development and 150 hours of practice per year.

The APA Career Pathway enables physiotherapists to become Titled and/or Specialists (as awarded by the Australian College of Physiotherapists) in specific chosen areas.

Tools and resources

1	Find a practitioner here. This page offers a searchable directory to help you find the most appropriate physiotherapist for your condition in your location.	Australian Physiotherapy Association
2	Find out more about Physiotherapy here. This website provides more detailed information about physiotherapy services and their scope and range of practice.	Australian Physiotherapy Association

Podiatrist

What is Podiatry?

Podiatrists provide care for foot and lower limb conditions. They diagnose and treat issues across all ages, including older adults, children, and athletes. Their services include managing chronic disease complications, wounds, fall prevention, and minor surgeries. Podiatrists aim to improve mobility, reduce pain, and enhance quality of life.

When should I refer to a Podiatry?

Podiatrists work in various settings. Typical reasons for a referral or self-referral include:

- Foot, ankle, or lower limb pain
- Diabetic foot care and complications
- Wound care and management
- Sports injuries or rehabilitation
- Falls prevention and reablement
- Minor surgical intervention
- Development and prescription of orthotics and medical footwear.

What do Podiatrists do?

Podiatrists provide comprehensive care for diverse patient groups, including older adults, children, high-risk patients, and athletes. They focus on reablement, falls prevention, wound management, and minor surgeries, working to improve mobility, reduce pain, and enhance quality of life through person focused care.

How are Podiatrists qualified?

To qualify as a podiatrist in Australia, practitioners must complete a four-year tertiary degree. Podiatrists must also:

- Register with the Podiatry Board of Australia and adhere to the registration standards and Codes of Conduct
- Complete 20 hours of continuing professional development annually
- Comply with audit requirements.

Podiatrists can undertake further training to become endorsed prescribers and pursue certifications in paediatrics and sports through the Australian Podiatry Association (APodA). Additional education and training allows podiatrists to become podiatric surgeons.

Tools and resources

1	Find a practitioner here. This page offers a searchable directory, intended to help you find podiatrists near you.	APodA
2	Find out more about Podiatry here. This website provides more detailed information about Podiatry services, including back to school, careers toolkit and Podiatry Week resources	APodA

Psychologist

What is Psychology?

Psychology is the scientific study of the mind and behaviour, including how people think, feel and act both individually and in groups. Psychologists are experts in mental health, applying their deep understanding of human behaviour and cognition to help individuals navigate mental health and wellbeing challenges. They provide guidance about how to appropriately manage mental health for people who may be affected by diagnosable conditions such as depression, anxiety, personality disorders, and neurodevelopmental disorders

When should I refer to a Psychologist?

People may benefit from the support of a psychologist in a wide range of situations. Some typical reasons why someone might be referred, or might independently choose, to see a psychologist include:

- Symptoms of anxiety, depression or other mental health issues
- Chronic stress, trauma, disability or life events (e.g., grief and loss, parenting, natural disasters) that are impacting daily functioning, work or relationships
- Neurodivergence and behaviours that impact health and affect work, academic or social function (e.g., substance use, sleep, eating, attention difficulties)
- Chronic health conditions (e.g., diabetes, pain, dementia) where psychologists can help with treatment adherence, lifestyle changes and carer support.

What do Psychologists do?

Psychologists apply evidence-based practices to conduct assessments and provide interventions that foster optimal personal, social, educational and occupational mental health, wellbeing and development. Mental health therapy may also involve psychoeducation, monitoring, and evaluation for a wide range of psychological conditions. Outside of primary care, psychologists also work in organisations, consultancy, educational psychology, and research and academia.

How are Psychologists qualified?

To become eligible for general registration as a psychologist requires:

- Completion of a minimum six-year sequence of education and training
- Registration with the Psychology Board of Australia which sets out the scope of practice, ethical standards and continuing professional development (CPD) applicable to practitioners including:
 - a minimum of 30 hours per year of CPD, and
 - adhering to the Psychology Codes of Ethics

Psychologists may pursue additional supervised practice and training in one of nine Areas of Practice Endorsement, demonstrating advanced expertise in their scope of practice.

Tools and resources

1	Find a practitioner here or here. These pages offer a searchable directory, to help you find psychologists near you.	Australian Association of Psychologists, Australian Psychological Society
2	Find out more about psychology here and here. These websites provide more detailed information about the work of psychologists as well as resources for practitioners.	Australian Association of Psychologists, Australian Psychological Society

Rehabilitation Counsellor

What is Rehabilitation Counselling?

Rehabilitation Counsellors are uniquely skilled, tertiary qualified and specifically trained professionals that work across the biological, psychological and social domains (biopsychosocial), to assist people with disability, health conditions and disadvantage, participate in employment or education, or live independently and access services in the community to achieve their personal, educational and vocational goals.

When should I refer to a Rehabilitation Counsellor?

Rehabilitation Counsellors work with clients on strategies to overcome obstacles and personal challenges they may be facing, For example: a hospital inpatient who has recently been affected by trauma and/or injury that may affect their financial wellbeing in the future. We also provide case management, adjustment to injury counselling or assist in primary care eg, Lung disease, acquired brain injury and spinal care units.

What do Rehabilitation Counsellors do?

Our core practice works within systems and/or schemes and not only provides therapeutic interventions but also assists clients navigate those systems to achieve positive health outcomes. We combine therapeutic approaches of counselling and use work as rehabilitation. As specialised counsellors who have a deep understanding of the impact of disability, health conditions and disadvantage on people's lives, we support people:

- living with acute and chronic pain
- with disability
- with a health condition that impacts work/study
- who have experienced an injury and/or trauma
- in the Australian Defence Force or a Veteran
- living with social disadvantage.

How are Rehabilitation Counsellors qualified?

To qualify and practice as a Rehabilitation Counsellor and Full Member of the Australian Society of Rehabilitation Counsellors (ASORC) practitioners must:

- Complete tertiary qualifications in Rehabilitation Counselling
- Undertake 20 hours continuing professional development (CPD) annually
- Adhere to the ASORC Code of Ethics and uphold the standards of practice
- Comply with audit and compliance requirements and mandatory declarations.

Rehabilitation Counsellors may have additional areas of focus including Forensic Vocational Assessment (medico-legal reports), trauma informed counselling, lifetime care planning, and early intervention mental health counselling.

Please note: Rehabilitation Consultant is an industry title and therefore a Rehabilitation Consultant may not be a qualified Rehabilitation Counsellor.

Tools and resources

1	Find a Rehabilitation Counsellor here. This page offers a searchable directory, intended to help you find Rehabilitation Counsellors near you.	The Australian Society of Rehabilitation Counsellors (ASORC)
2	Find out more about Rehabilitation Counsellors here. This website provides information about Rehabilitation Counselling services and Health Benefits of Good Work	The Australian Society of Rehabilitation Counsellors (ASORC)

Social Worker

What is Social Work?

Social workers partner with people to address personal difficulties and structural barriers in their lives, with a focus on personal and social wellbeing. They work with a wide range of individuals, families, groups and communities and advocate for their human rights

When should I refer to a Social Worker?

Social workers work with people experiencing difficulties related to family violence, physical and mental ill-health, addiction, trauma, abuse, poverty, homelessness, and social injustice and discrimination. Social workers work with people via one-on-one counselling, casework, group work, advocacy, community development, policy, research and education.

Accredited Mental Health Social Workers (AMHSWs) are recognised Medicare providers who deliver mental health services via the Better Access scheme, and people with a Mental Health Treatment Plan can be referred to access Medicare rebates. AMHSWs also provide other MBS-funded services such as Chronic Disease Management, Non-Directive Pregnancy Support Counselling, and Eating Disorder Psychological Treatment.

What do Social Workers do?

Social workers undertake comprehensive biopsychosocial assessments with people to understand their history/background and current circumstances, including work, family and relationships, housing, and physical and mental health. Social workers help people navigate and access information across service systems and advocate on their behalf. Accredited Mental Health Social Workers (AMHSWs) use a range of strategies to support people experiencing mental health issues. These social workers have advanced experience, skills and knowledge in mental health and deliver evidence-based treatments.

How are social workers qualified?

Social work is a university-qualified profession. Many social worker roles mandate eligibility for membership of the Australian Association of Social Workers (AASW). This requires completion of an AASW-accredited tertiary social work qualification or equivalent overseas qualification. Practitioners must undertake 1000 hours of supervised professional placements. To practice as an Accredited Mental Health Social Worker (AMHSW), social workers must meet rigorous additional accreditation criteria and ongoing requirements. AMHSWs are recognised providers with Medicare Australia as well as other mental health funding programs. All members of the AASW:

- Adhere to the AASW Code of Ethics
- Are subject to the Ethics and Complaints Process.

For AMHSWs, accreditation involves:

- At least 2 years FTE supervised post-qualifying experience in a mental health setting
- Annual mandatory 30 hours of CPD, including supervision
- Demonstration of ability and knowledge of clinical mental health social work practice.

Tools and resources

1	Find a Social Worker here. This page offers a searchable directory, intended to help you find social workers near you.	Australian Association of Social Work
2	Find out more about Social Work here. This website provides information about social work practice as well as resources for social workers.	Australian Association of Social Workers

Sonographer

What is Sonography?

Sonographers are experts in ultrasound who perform real-time, customised, diagnostic examinations using non-invasive, high-frequency ultrasound to 'see' inside the body. Ultrasound is the most requested diagnostic imaging modality in Australia. It is widely available and carries a lower cost and risk than most other medical imaging techniques.

When should I refer to a Sonographer?

Medical practitioners often seek a sonographer's examination to assist in the diagnosis of a wide range of health issues. As ultrasound is so effective at showing the structure of soft tissue inside the body, sonographers can check fetal development during pregnancy, review the structure and function of internal organs and systems as well as investigate the root cause of a person's unexplained pain, lumps, or an abnormal blood test.

While a referral from a medical practitioner is not always required for ultrasound services, it is needed for the patient to claim Medicare benefits.

What do Sonographers do?

Sonographers use medical and technical expertise to explore, detect, examine and capture images or video (sonograms), record measurements such as the size of a tumor or length of a fetus, and measure the blood flow through vessels.

The information sonographers collect gives health professionals a more complete picture of a person's physical condition to help with diagnosis and treatment of a broad range of conditions. Some sonographers specialise in particular areas, including obstetric, cardiac and vascular sonography.

How are Sonographers qualified?

To qualify and work as a Sonographer, practitioners must:

- Complete a recognised post graduate qualification
- Complete clinical training of up to 2,200 hours or three days per week over two years
- Complete continuing professional development through a recognised program.

For a sonographer's examinations to be eligible for Medicare rebates, they must also be accredited by the Australian Sonographer Accreditation Registry (ASAR).

Sonographers may also undertake specialist qualifications in obstetric, cardiac and vascular sonography.

Tools and resources

1	Find a practitioner here. This page offers a searchable directory, intended to help you find Sonographers near you.	The Australian Sonographer Accreditation Registry (ASAR)
2	Find out more about sonography here. This website provides more detailed information about sonography services, including an overview of ultrasound services and the health profession of sonography.	The Australasian Sonography Association (ASA)

Speech Pathologist

What is Speech Pathology?

Speech pathologists are experts in communication and swallowing across the life span. They diagnose and treat communication and swallowing needs due to delay, disorder, disability, impairment, loss and to meet individual and community goals. Communication includes speaking, listening, understanding language, reading, writing, social skills, stuttering and using voice. Swallowing includes orally eating and drinking, sucking, saliva control, mealtime participation and protecting the lungs from food, drink and saliva.

When should I refer to a speech pathologist?

Anyone can see a speech pathologist to improve their communication and/or swallowing. The reasons for referral may include:

- Speech that is difficult to understand
- Difficulties with learning to read or spell
- Difficulties with language following an acquired brain injury
- Needing alternative methods to communicate, for example an electronic communication device
- Following surgery to the tongue or voice box.

A person does not need a referral to see a speech pathologist. However, they might need one to access Medicare or government funding.

What do speech pathologists do?

Speech pathologists work with individuals, their families and communities to support communication and swallowing goals. Speech pathologists work in education, private practice, early intervention, disability services, hospitals, community and home services, residential aged care, Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander health, justice, mental health, universities and government.

How are speech pathologists qualified?

Speech Pathology Australia (SPA) sets and maintains the standards for speech pathologists in Australia. To practice as a Certified Practising Speech Pathologist (CPSP) practitioners must:

- Complete an Australian accredited speech pathology Bachelor or Master degree or if qualified overseas successfully complete a Skills Assessment.
- Adhere to Speech Pathology Australia's Code of Ethics
- Complete a minimum of 20 hours professional development per year
- Maintain recency of practice
- Comply with audit requirements.

Only speech pathologists with CPSP status can provide services through Medicare or other government funding.

Tools and resources

1	Find a speech pathologist here. This page offers a searchable directory, intended to help you find speech pathologists near you.	Speech Pathology Australia
2	Find out more about speech pathology here. This website provides more detailed information about the work of speech pathologists as evidence-based information about speech, language and communication needs.	Speech Pathology Australia

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