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NTOI Marketing & Communications Policy

Introduction:

Policies set out hereunder apply to ALL current NTOI members and aspiring members.

Policies set out hereunder apply to ALL public facing marketing & communications material; thus most significantly (but not exclusively): practitioner websites; practice brochures; adverts for clinic and/or events, teachings, talks etc.; protocols and advice given to individuals in clinic, whether verbally, in hardcopy, by E-mail, or via any recorded medium; all other similar communications material representing the work of an NTOI member and accessible to any member(s) of the public.

Policies are either binding or advisory as indicated. NTOI reserves the right to alter, amend or augment these policies in the future in response to changing needs.

Contravention of binding policies will trigger a disciplinary procedure and may end in permanent exclusion from NTOI. The purpose of codifying policies in the area of marketing and communications are several, most notably:

- Protecting each individual member.
- Protecting the integrity of NTOI as a professional representative organisation.
- Serving to build a broader positive public perception of the profession of nutritional therapy.

The exigencies of these policies are of course to not reflect the collective belief set of the committees, Directors or membership of NTOI, but are simply what we believe to be the most sensible and safe way for us to conduct our work, collectively and individually, given all currently prevailing legislative, commercial and cultural challenges.



Other Therapeutic Modalities

[Binding] It is not permissible for members to indicate that they offer or provide any other therapeutic modalities other than NT except in those cases where a particular member holds dual qualifications (in for example, acupuncture, nursing, medicine, science etc.).

[Binding] Members interested in or practicing other healing arts that do not involve at least a year's study in an accredited college are required to make no mention of these interests on the same websites, brochures etc. that explain the member's nutritional therapy offering.

[Advisory] Members are requested not to discuss their opinions on the usefulness of other therapeutic modalities in a general sense. (A brief word in respect of a specific ailment is acceptable: thus, for example, avoid saying "Mary is a great believer in osteopathy" but if discussing infant colic specifically, one might mention the usefulness of cranial in this specific respect. Preferred wording would be general rather than personal; e.g. "Clients report finding cranial osteopathy helpful ... rather than "Mary finds cranial ...")

[Advisory] For dual qualified members only. Such members are asked to give primacy in their communications to their NT skill set rather than the other element of their work, certainly if 1) the nutritional element is at least as significant in their day to day work; and/or 2) if the other training involved a shorter course of study. Where the other training was the longer one, e.g. medicine for example, we trust the member to give suitable weight to the nutritional therapy element of their training as appropriate based on their particular practice.

[Advisory] Any practitioner making extensive use of referrals to practitioners of other modalities are entitled to refer to this fact but NTOI requests that such information would be kept to the briefest fact of referrals occurring (rather than discussion of findings; others contacts etc.) As any references to some of the more esoteric healing arts are liable to harm the NTOI brand, NTOI reserves the right to request a member to remove content deemed harmful to the brand and/or profession in specific instances.



Claims of Efficacy; Curing, Treating

[Binding] It is not permissible for members to state directly that they can cure any illness. This applies above all to cancer; any indication by a member that she/he even treats cancer patients is liable to trigger the disciplinary procedure. * See the tip below.

[Advisory] Given the very tight legislation under which we already operate, members are asked to avoid claiming that they successfully treat any pathology. * See the tip below *

[Tip] There are several ways a practitioner may acceptably and safely imply efficacy without making any direct claims:

a) **Generalise it:** It is acceptable to say something like “many clients visit nutritional therapists for help with ... “ (This then becomes a neutral description of clients' behaviour implying nothing about one's own therapeutic efficacy etc.)

b) **Dysfunctions; not diseases:** It is both more in keeping with smart FM thinking and more prudent in the current environment to develop the habit of thinking, speaking and writing about helping with imbalances or dysfunctions rather than treating illnesses. Thus, one does not say “Anne treats diabetes” but “Anne works to balance blood sugar” (optional: “with diabetic clients”) etc. Similarly, one can avoid claiming to treat rheumatoid arthritis by speaking of the functional elements; such as “addressing leaky gut, exploring for poorly tolerated foods; testing for pathogens etc. all of which may contribute to RA-like symptomology” etc etc.

c) **Testimonials clients may claim:** The testimonials area on a website or a brochure is a great way to indicate one's competence generally and/or ones skills in a particular area without having to make any claims oneself. (Important: testimonials must always be 100% genuine; stored and retrievable and permission sought prior to publish from the client.



Advising Clients about Medications

[Binding] It is never permissible to instruct, advise or persuade any client to make any changes to their prescribed medications, unless one is both a doctor and an NT. There are no exceptions to this rule.

[Advisory] It is quite a different situation when clients themselves signal their own interest or intention to cease, augment, reduce or modify their own medications. Similarly, provided one is 100% confident of the accuracy of one's knowledge, it is permissible to offer factual opinions about known issues with certain medications. (Examples would be to say that statins lower levels of CoQ10; PPI meds can cause hypomagnesaemia etc.). It is important to “top and tail” all such comments with a reminder that one is not a doctor and that any and all changes to medications should be discussed with a doctor. (This reminder around medical advice etc. is offered both before and after any comments on the medication question.)

[Advisory] It is permissible to share factual studies with clients wherein the dangers of certain medications are discussed. Again, as the absolute veracity of such material is paramount, web articles are best avoided in favour of published studies only.

[Advisory] It is permissible to share anecdotes of others one has worked with in clinic who may for example have managed to cease certain medications over time, in consultation with their doctor. At all times the guiding principle must be that choices around medications are a matter for the client in consultation with his/her doctor. As an NT, one's role is limited to helping with what this partnership wishes to do. That said, one is entitled to express one's own professional views in a general sense, refer to one's choices and/or share research data etc. as appropriate.

Supplying or Recommending Prescribed Supplements

[Binding] It is not permissible for members to either supply directly or to recommend the use of supplements known to be currently banned by the HPRA either entirely or for non-medical practitioner use in Ireland. As this is a continuously changing situation, NTOI will circulate a short list annually.

[Advisory] It is acceptable to speak to clients of current legislative and logistical impediments to acquiring certain supplements and in so doing letting them know of the ways that others circumvent these rules whilst of course not advising them to do likewise.



Controversial Topics & Conflict Management

It is a fact that many of the beliefs and clinical approaches adopted by many of us are not at all mainstream. While this is of course our fundamental *raison d'être*, offering a real difference, it is prudent if not essential to maintain a level of circumspection and humility about “us being right” and “them being wrong”. Even if any of us currently view the medical hegemony as “the enemy”, it is vital to be clever about how best to engage that “enemy”. NTOI will not shirk from offering our view but neither will we ever do so in a strident, arrogant or triumphalist way, as doing so will only foment needless conflict and risk our important views being mocked and ignored entirely. At all times the guiding principle must be to seek to keep lines of dialogue with all other stakeholders open. An attitude of perpetual questioning and/or ongoing sifting of evidence is preferable to one of certainty. Nutritional science is ever-evolving and open to all manner of interpretation so the views of others must be respected. The NTOI brand wishes to be associated with this attitude of questioning rather than that of pushing of conclusions on others.

[Advisory] Especially in the case of topics known to be controversial (gluten; veganism; vaccines; chemotherapy, food intolerance testing etc.), members should air material and/or personal views in as neutral and questioning manner as possible. Members should ideally come across as making sincere efforts to approach a justifiable hypothesis on the given matter rather than already “having all the answers”. NTOI reserves the right to censure any member who repeatedly ignores this advice and continues to harangue other practitioners and/or the public with strident certainty.



Social Media

[Binding] Any practitioner using either a Facebook account or a Twitter account to promote their nutritional therapy work and/or share views on nutrition and health must restrict postings to nutrition and health related topics only.

[Advisory] Be aware that most of what you do on social media is accessible by all and potentially forever. It is almost certainly not going to help one's own business nor NTOI if any member's brand is not communicated clearly and without extraneous noise involving views and posting on non-health related topics. Consider your users: they are following and liking your page as they are interested in your views on nutrition and health only. Members continually ignoring this request may be subject to discipline by NTOI.

[Tips] If a member feels driven to share their views on other topics (Palestine; global warming; the Church in Irish education; whether 911 was a false flag op), consider developing another webpage, ideally branded or anonymous so that one's political views are not readily linkable to your professional practice. Bear in mind that one will likely never lose a client for political views not stated but one will certainly lose some or even many by openly expressing forceful political views. Another option, ideal for Twitter, which some keen to express robust views might wish to consider is to set up an anonymous or alias account. This has the advantage of enabling a person to speak freely without either their own practice or NTOI being embroiled in any unnecessary controversy.