

GP Connect

Keeping GPs informed in the changing primary health landscape



11 June 2020

Getting your patients back into the practice

In the wake of COVID-19, WA Primary Health Alliance has been working to understand the immediate needs of GPs and their practices and support GPs to maintain a viable practice and productive workforce.

We recognise that WA GPs are experiencing business and financial pressures due to a range of issues, and that thanks to social isolation measures, many have been quieter than usual.

For some, there is concern that patients may be neglecting their regular medical care or not attending for appointments that are necessary for screening, prescriptions or immunisations.

Our [See Your GP](#) campaign has been developed to provide your patients with reassurance about safety and a reminder not to neglect their health. By doing so, we seek to support GPs by promoting the availability and safety of primary care, emphasise the importance of ongoing care, and raise awareness of alternative appointment options such as telehealth.

North Perth GP Dr Belinda Wozencroft says the campaign has helped to reassure patients that it's safe to come back to the practice.

"People were wise to be cautious in the beginning, but are starting to feel more comfortable with face to face GP visits as they know practices are taking care to keep visiting patients safe," Dr Wozencroft said.



There is a range of [See your GP resources](#) available to remind your patients of the importance of regular medical appointments and reassure them of the availability of safe, essential health care. This includes flyers, social media posts and videos you can download and share on your channels.

You can also continue to reach out to patients through your own regular communications channels, such as newsletters, SMS reminders, via your online booking page or on your website to reinforce the campaigns key messages.

Since launching in late April, the campaign has reached about 1 million people across WA through Google advertising, Facebook, Instagram, state and regional newspapers (including a full page feature in The West Australian) and radio, as well as in- practice screens.

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Getting your patients back into the practice (cont)

As practices are now starting to see an upward trend in presentations, WAPHA will look to refocus the campaign on other areas of need, such as mental health, screening, flu and other immunisations.

If you would like to know more or require support, please contact your Primary Health Liaison or the Practice Assist team via email practiceassist@wapha.org.au or phone 1800 227 747.

EOIs sought for Mental Health Initial Assessment and Referral Project

WA Primary Health Alliance is seeking interested GPs to join an Advisory Group that will contribute to a co-design process to develop and pilot a new Initial Assessment and Referral service for GPs managing patients with or at risk of mental illness, who can be appropriately managed in primary care.

The Group will provide input into the service design through contributing to key decision making and identifying preferred solutions to build the basic service model architecture.

WAPHA is particularly keen to involve practitioners who work with people experiencing significant socio-economic disadvantage and/or are from identified priority populations (ATSI, CaLD, LGBTI) such as:

- GPs who have expertise and/or experience in primary mental health care
- GPs who work with people experiencing significant disadvantage and barriers to accessing appropriate mental health care
- GPs who are committed in improving these services irrespective of expertise and/or experience.

Members will receive a participation payment. [Download the EOI](#) for more information or apply [here](#) by Friday 26 June 2020.

GP Hospital Liason Updates

SCGH Outpatient Referrals

Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital's extensive review of outpatient services includes centralising the receipt of urgent referrals from GPs.

After patients have been discussed and accepted by a speciality clinician for urgent care within seven days, referrals should now be emailed to SPoRT@health.wa.gov.au unless otherwise directed.

Referrals for a specialist outpatient appointment not requiring care within seven days should continue to be sent to the Central Referral Service (CRS).

You can escalate the urgency of a referral previously submitted by resubmitting through CRS and highlighting your concerns. CRS can then prioritise and escalate the referral.

If the patient needs immediate care (within seven days) contact the speciality clinician via switchboard for direction.

Dr Christine Pascott
Hospital Liaison GP, Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital
christine.pascott@health.wa.gov.au
0401 675 400

Click [here](#) to read about the free WA Primary Health Alliance General Practice Wellness Program.

RPH Cardiometabolic Clinic –patients on Evolocumab

In the future, GPs will be asked to take over management of patients with hypercholesterolaemia who have remained stable with minimal side effects after more than 6 months to one year of Evolocumab (Repatha) injections.

Evolocumab is a well-tolerated, injectable monoclonal antibody against proprotein convertase subtilisin/kexin type 9 (PCSK9) with streamlined PBS authority listings that GPs can utilise for patients who:

- Have heterozygous or homozygous familial hypercholesterolaemia (FH) or non-familial hypercholesterolaemia; and
- Fail to achieve guideline recommended cholesterol targets on maximally tolerated doses of statins and ezetimibe (including those who are statin intolerant); and
- Have previously received PBS-subsidised treatment with this drug for these conditions.

Evolocumab is well tolerated, the most common minimal reported side effects are:

- Local injection site reactions
- Nasal congestion
- Back ache

Handover to GPs seeing patients on Evolocumab will occur by letter including target lipids. Patients will also be asked to see their GP for repeat prescriptions of Evolocumab, and to monitor therapeutic efficacy and side effects. The Cardiometabolic Clinic will provide additional support as required. For further information and support, please contact the Cardiometabolic Clinic on 9224 8092.

GPs may be interested in the “[Hyperlipidaemia](#)” and “[Familial Hypercholesterolaemia](#)” HealthPathways.

Dr Jacquie Garton-Smith
Hospital Liaison GP, Royal Perth Hospital
Jacquie.Garton-Smith@health.wa.gov.au
Generally available Mondays and Thursdays

New FSH Rapid Access Thyroid Clinic

A new Rapid Access Clinic for assessment of urgent endocrine surgical patients within one week of referral is now available at Fiona Stanley Hospital (FSH). Referral for the following conditions should be discussed and sent directly to the hospital via the Urgent Endocrine Surgical Referrals process (below):

Thyroid:

- Thyroid mass and:
 - Sonographic ATA intermediate or high risk of thyroid cancer
 - Cytology showing malignant thyroid cancer or suspicious thyroid cancer
 - FDG-PET positive thyroid nodule
 - Rapid nodule growth
 - Symptomatic airway compromise or stridor
 - Unexplained hoarseness or voice change.
 - Cervical lymphadenopathy
 - Personal history of neck irradiation
 - Family history of thyroid cancer or endocrinopathy
- Severe Graves' disease that is medically uncontrollable.

Parathyroid

- Hyperparathyroidism with severe hypercalcemia over 3.0.
- Hyperparathyroidism in pregnancy.

Adrenal:

- Adrenocortical cancer or highly suspected adrenocortical cancer
- Large adrenal mass (over 4cm)
- Pheochromocytoma or paraganglioma
- Cushing's syndrome

Lymph node:

- Lymphadenopathy and suspected lymphoma

For urgent endocrine surgical referrals, directly contact the Endocrine Surgical Registrar via the FSH Helpdesk on 6152 2222. Once accepted these should be marked “Urgent Rapid Thyroid Access Clinic” and emailed to rapidaccessthyroidclinic@health.wa.gov.au or faxed to 6152 9762.

GP Hospital Liason Updates (cont)

This referral information is also available on the "[Acute Endocrinology Assessment](#)" HealthPathway. See also "[Thyroid Nodules and Goitre](#)", and "[Neck Lumps](#)".

Most of these patients will be seen within 30 days and assessment will be made using a one-stop model where appropriate. This involves same-day clinical assessment, ultrasound, FNA and cytology. Routine endocrine surgical referrals should be sent via CRS in the usual manner.

Dr Monica Lacey
Hospital Liaison GP, Fiona Stanley Hospital
monica.lacey@health.wa.gov.au
(08) 61524731
Mondays and Thursdays

Clinical Updates

PBS Changes to Opioid Prescribing PBS

Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) listings for opioid medicines have changed as of 1 June 2020. Changes include reduced pack sizes of immediate-release opioids for short-term acute severe pain. In addition, patients that need long-term opioids (more than 12 months) must also be reviewed by an alternative prescriber with the name of the practitioner and date of the consultation provided to the PBS with every authority application.

Visit the [PBS website](#) for more information.

Working remotely, but still here for you

In an effort to reduce the risk presented by busy workplaces to our staff and frontline health workers, WA Primary Health Alliance will continue to restrict our face-to-face interactions.

We want to ensure that practices remain and feel supported, so we are encouraging our practice support team to reach out to you using other channels to identify your needs and concerns.

We have released a detailed FAQ on our approach to working remotely and planning ahead, that can be found [here](#).

For further assistance please contact your Primary Health Liaison or the Practice Assist team via email practiceassist@wapha.org.au or 1800 227 747.

Staying informed about COVID-19

WA Primary Health Alliance is continuing to work with general practice to respond to the outbreak of COVID-19. GPs can find the latest information and resources on the [Practice Assist website](#) and [subscribe](#) to our twice weekly dedicated COVID-19 GP Update.

The GP Update is brought to you in partnership with WA Department of Health, Royal Australian College of General Practitioners WA, Australian Medical Association (WA), Rural Health West, WA Primary Health Alliance, Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine, and WA General Practice Education and Training.

Clinical Updates (cont)

Release of the July 2020 MBS XML File

The July 2020 Medicare Benefits Schedule MBS XML file has been released and is available on [MBS online](#). The MBS indexation factor for 1 July 2020 is 1.5 per cent. Indexation was applied to most of the general medical services items, all diagnostic imaging services, except nuclear medicine imaging and magnetic resonance imaging (MRI) and two pathology items (74990 and 74991).

For more information please view the [MBS July 2020 News page](#).

ePrescribing coming soon

The Australian Digital Health Agency has advised Electronic Prescribing will soon be available for practices who would like to send fully digital scripts to patients via SMS or email instead of traditional paper scripts.

The WA Primary Health Alliance Practice Support team will be contacting all practices with a checklist of requirements to help ensure that they are prepared to start using ePrescribing when it is released.

For further information on ePrescribing, please visit the [Digital Health site](#) or the [Practice Assist Electronic Prescriptions page](#). You can also contact the My Health Record Team on myhealthrecord@wapha.org.au.

Lung Foundation COPD winter campaign resources

To support GPs to keep patients with Chronic Obstructive Pulmonary Disease as well as possible during winter and reduce the need for emergency medical intervention, the Lung Foundation has launched it's 'Come Prepared' winter campaign. Download resources [here](#) or view the [COPD HealthPathway](#).

Immunisation Program changes from 1 July 2020

From 1 July 2020, there are a number of changes to the National Immunisation Program coming into effect to improve protection against meningococcal and pneumococcal disease:

- Introduction of meningococcal B vaccination and changes to meningococcal ACWY vaccination
- Hepatitis A vaccination schedule points for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander children in NT, Qld, SA and WA will change in consideration of the introduction of the meningococcal B vaccine.
- Pneumococcal vaccination schedule will change to reflect the current best clinical evidence in preventing pneumococcal disease in adults and in people with conditions that increase their risk of disease.

End of life and palliative care education and training

In response to recommendations of the Joint Select Committee from the My Life, My Choice Report and the WA End of Life Palliative Care Strategy, the WA Cancer and Palliative Care Network, End-of-life and Palliative Care Project has developed education and training resources for GPs caring for patients with life limiting illness. Download from the [Department of Health website](#)

Free breast screening resuming in regional areas

BreastScreen WA's four mobile screening units have started to resume country screening. Commencing across the Midwest in June and then throughout WA into 2021.

Women aged 40 years or over are eligible to have a FREE screening mammogram at BreastScreen WA every two years. You can direct your patients to the [BreastScreen WA website](#) to make a booking.

Clinical Updates (cont)

NPS MedicineWise topics now available online

NPS MedicineWise are offering virtual visits via video call for its current therapeutic topic [Paediatric asthma: breathing new life into diagnosis and management.](#)

Just like practice visits, virtual visits are approved activities under the RACGP & ACRRM CPD programs. The visiting material is sent to you prior to a virtual visits via a Skype, FaceTime, ZOOM, Health Direct, or Scopia.

Topics can be delivered in just 30 minutes and can be scheduled at a mutually convenient time – including before or after standard work hours.

Schedule a virtual visit appointment through the [NPS MedicineWise website](#) or email BookAVisit@nps.org.au.

New evidence-based guidance on mental illness of older persons at the end of life

[palliAGED](#) has developed new online resources on understanding and caring for older persons suffering from mental illness and approaching the end of their life.

The new resources include the [Mental Illness Practice page](#) which lists evidence-based tools, links, and other information to guide health professionals involved in planning and providing care.

The [Mental Illness Evidence pages](#) provide a summary and in-depth synthesis of the latest evidence and research on caring for older persons suffering from depression, anxiety, schizophrenia, and suicidality.

These pages may be of particular interest to GPs involved in aged care planning and coordination, and policy development.

New healthy lifestyle program for the Midwest

Let's Prevent provides your patients with the information and support they need to make positive, sustainable lifestyle changes that will ultimately help them delay or avoid a chronic condition.

Already established in the South West for over two years, the program will soon be available to residents of the Midwest. It can help participants lose weight, reduce their blood pressure and cholesterol and work towards their health goals.

Let's Prevent is funded by the Department of Health WA free for people who are at risk of heart disease, stroke or type 2 diabetes.

It is currently available [online](#) and through face to face workshops in the near future. To find out more call 1800 001 880 or email prevention@diabeteswa.com.au.

Nominations open for RACGP Awards celebrating excellence in general practice

The RACGP Awards focus on exceptional individuals in Australian general practice for their outstanding achievements and contribution to the health of their community.

Nominations are now open for the 2020 RACGP Awards. If you know an extraordinary GP, GP in training, GP supervisor, or general practice going above and beyond to improve the health of the community, [nominate them for an award here.](#)

Online Education



[Care planning during a pandemic](#)

RACGP

Thursday 11 June 2020, 5pm–6pm

This webinar presented by local GP, Dr Fermin Blanco Mayo, provides an update on advance care directives, advance care plans and enduring guardianship

[NDIS and Mental Health](#)

Transition Support Project, Flinders University

June 11, 16 and 20

An Education session for clinicians supporting people with psychosocial disability to access the NDIS.

[Upcoming National Immunisation Program changes: what you need to know](#)

The National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance

Tuesday June 16 2020, 11am – 1pm

This webinar will provide an overview of the upcoming changes to the National Immunisation Program recommendation for pneumococcal, meningococcal and hepatitis A vaccination.

[Hepatitis C in Primary Care](#)

Australasian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis & Sexual Health Medicine

Tuesday 16 June 2020, 4:30pm - 7pm

Provides an overview of the management of hepatitis C in primary care settings and covers case finding, testing and diagnosis, patient assessment and treatment.

[Management of breast lumps](#)

RACGP

Tuesday 23 June 2020, 5pm

This interactive webinar presented by specialist endocrine, breast and general surgeon, Dr Amro Labib, uses case study discussions to provide GPs with an update on strategies for breast cancer management.

[Prescribing Pre-Exposure Prophylaxis \(PrEP\) for HIV in WA general practice](#)

RACGP and ASHM

Tuesday 30 June 2020, 5.00–7.30pm

This RACGP member webinar explores the strategies available for the prevention of HIV transmission, focusing on pre-exposure prophylaxis (PrEP). Presented by WA GP and HIV s100 prescriber, Dr Ric Chaney.

Free GP eLearning from the InsideOut Institute for eating disorders

The Australian Government Department of Health is providing free access for 5000 Australian clinicians to undertake the Essentials: Training Clinicians in Eating Disorders Essentials program.

It meets the basic training requirements of the National Eating Disorders Collaboration competency framework and will also help GPs to meet the requirements for providing services under the new MBS Eating Disorder Item numbers. Register [here](#) for no cost using the code WAESSENTIALSPRIVATE.National