

# GP Connect

Keeping GPs informed in the changing primary health landscape



17 August 2023

## Changes to prescribing of medical abortion

Dr. Alison Creagh, Medical Educator, Sexual Health Quarters (SHQ)

From 1 August 2023, any doctor\* in Western Australia is permitted to prescribe medical abortion medications, MS-2 Step (mifepristone and misoprostol), and they are no longer required to complete an online training course every three years. In addition, pharmacists no longer need to be authorised to dispense these medications.

These changes are likely to significantly improve access to medical abortion for patients. However, it is important that each practitioner new to medical abortion think about their own process, to minimise the risk of complications. It is recommended to seek support from those with significant experience, and/or complete some training. Online training, while no longer a requirement, is still available at no cost from the drug manufacturer. More information is available [here](#). For those hoping to offer medical abortion soon, it is important to consider:

- Will I offer 'very early' abortions (before the pregnancy tissue can be seen on ultrasound in the uterine cavity)? If so, how will I make sure the patient is well-informed about the risk of ectopic pregnancy?
- How will I make sure the patient has all the information they need to make an informed choice of procedure, how to take the medications, and what to do if any difficulties occur?
- How will I ensure that the patient understands the follow-up process, and the risk of complications?



- How will I ensure that follow-up is completed?

Until later this year (when the legislation is expected to change) the law in Western Australia requires providers have a referral from another doctor who has discussed the risks of an abortion, the risks of continuing the pregnancy, and the option of a referral to counselling about this pregnancy. There is also a requirement, within 14 days of the abortion being performed (or the medications being prescribed) for the medical practitioner performing the abortion to complete a [notification form](#)

For resources about abortion for patients and for health professionals, see:

- King Edward Memorial Hospital - [WNHS pregnancy choices and abortion care service](#) (booklets for medical practitioners and patients)
- SHQ patient resource – [I'm Pregnant: What Are My Options?](#)

For more information about assessment, management, and referral for unintended pregnancy and abortion, see the following recently reviewed pathways from HealthPathways WA:

- [Unintended Pregnancy and Abortion](#)
- [Medical Abortion](#)
- [Follow-up After Abortion](#)

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## Changes to prescribing of medical abortion (cont)

Sexual Health Quarters (SHQ) also have a course on medical abortion prescribing in development – if interested contact [clinic.ed@shq.org.au](mailto:clinic.ed@shq.org.au)

*\*Current WA law restricts both referral for, and the provision of, abortion, to medical practitioners. New legislation is before Parliament, which is expected to remove the restriction later this year.*

## Clinical Updates

### 60-day dispensing plan to commence 1 September

From 1 September 2023, many patients living with an ongoing health condition who are stable on their current treatment will be able to receive twice the medication for the cost of a single prescription.

This will apply to more than 300 common medicines listed on the pharmaceutical benefits scheme and will be implemented in three stages over 12 months. Stage one includes 92 medicines and represents roughly one third of all the medicines eligible for 60-day prescriptions.

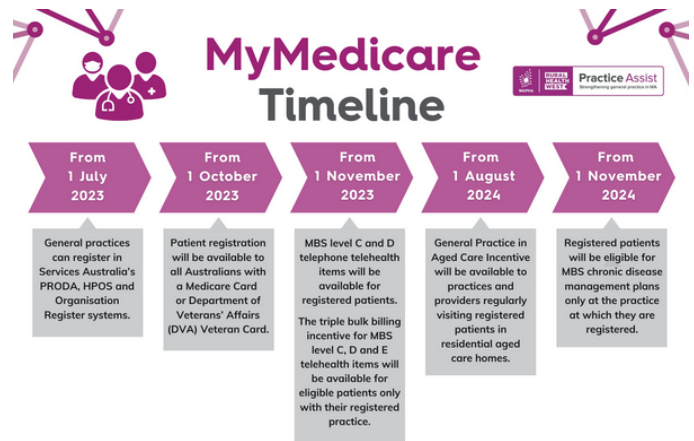
See the [list of the stage one medicines](#). The order of medicines to be made available in stages two and three is still being finalised.

The full list of eligible medicines that have been reviewed and recommended by PBAC as suitable for 60-day prescribing is available on the [medicine list for increased dispensing quantities](#).

Doctors will have the option to prescribe medicines for either 30 or 60-day prescriptions, according to their professional clinical judgement.

More information is available [here](#)

## MyMedicare



MyMedicare will be rolled out in a staged approach and is voluntary for practices, GPs and patients. Practices are encouraged to register before patient registration commences 1 October 2023.

The Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care's [website](#) includes the following information:

- [About MyMedicare](#)
- [Why it is important](#)
- [Eligibility](#) – general practices and health care providers
- [How to register](#) – general practices and patients
- [MyMedicare practice registration FAQ](#)

For questions or support please contact Practice Assist on 1800 2 ASSIST (1800 2 277 478 or 08 6278 7900) or via email [practiceassist@wapha.org.au](mailto:practiceassist@wapha.org.au)

**WATCH ON DEMAND**

**PRIMARY HEALTH CARE REFORM AND MYMEDICARE**

11 August 2023

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Watch the WA Primary Health Alliance webinar with Dr Wally Jammal on demand

Dr Wally Jammal shared his insights into the Government's primary care reform agenda with topics including:

- Primary care reform and what it means for you, your practice and your patients.
- MyMedicare and voluntary patient registration with confidence.
- Question and answer session.

**WATCH RECORDING NOW**

## New telehealth guidelines soon to take effect



Revised telehealth guidelines from the Medical Board of Australia will take effect from 1 September. Under the updated guidelines:

- Telehealth consultations will continue as an important feature of health care in Australia.
- Real-time doctor-patient consultations remain key to safe prescribing.
- Prescribing via questionnaire-based asynchronous web-based tools in the absence of a real-time patient-doctor consultation is not considered good practice.

Download a copy of [Guidelines: Telehealth consultations with patients](#) and see the HealthPathways WA '[Telehealth](#)' pathway.

## Treatment of urinary tract infections (UTIs) by pharmacists in WA

The WA Government has announced the issuing of a Structured Administration and Supply Arrangement (SASA) authorising trained pharmacists to supply Schedule 4 oral antibiotics for the treatment of urinary tract infections in low-risk patients. Pharmacists must keep a clinical record of the consultation and provide a service summary to the patient. The SASA also mandates that the dispensing record is transmitted to My Health Record.

Pharmacists are advised, but not mandated, to consider performing dipstick urinalysis as part of assessment. For more information including pharmacist training requirements and exclusion criteria, see WA Department of Health – [Treatment of Urinary Tract Infection \(UTIs\) by Pharmacists](#)

## Understanding cancer information needs for people from multicultural backgrounds

The Cancer Network at the WA Department of Health has recently published the community consultation outcomes report for the 'Culturally and linguistically diverse cancer information needs for consumers and carers' project.

The Cancer Network awarded five grants to community organisations across WA to conduct small group discussions and interviews with CaLD consumers and carers affected by cancer to identify their cancer information needs.

In total, 175 people (and carers) from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds were consulted, and the project findings identified a range of needs, including the overarching theme to improve access and empower people and carers from culturally and linguistically diverse backgrounds to obtain cancer information that address their health and cultural needs.

Key learnings relevant to GPs included:

- GPs were an important source of information for participants and can play a key role in improving cancer screening participation amongst culturally and linguistically diverse people.
- The types of information that participants found most helpful included diagnosis and prognosis, information to help them make an informed decision, treatment costs and financial support, support services, how the Australian health system works and lifestyle changes.
- Participants preferred it when information was person-centred and delivered in stages.

The report also outlines barriers to accessing and using cancer screening services amongst culturally and linguistically diverse communities and identifies strategies to improve participation in screening.

The report and summary of key findings are available on the WA Health website [here](#)

If you have any questions, contact the Cancer Network at [cancernetwork@health.wa.gov.au](mailto:cancernetwork@health.wa.gov.au).

## Head to Health adult mental health services open in Gosnells and Mirrabooka

Head to Health adult mental health centres have opened in Gosnells and Mirrabooka, offering free advice, support, assessment and treatment for people over 18 with stress, anxiety and other mental health issues and those who may be supporting them.

This takes the number of Head to Health Centres in WA to three, including Midland Head to Health which opened in March 2022.

They aim to improve access to mental health services for people whose condition is too complex for primary care but doesn't meet the criteria for an emergency department visit.

Centres are staffed by mental health nurses, social workers, occupational therapists and peer support workers and available services include:

- Initial assessment
- One-to-one counselling
- Access to therapy groups
- Peer support
- Care coordination with other services or agencies (eg NDIS).

If a client's care requires the input of a GP, psychologist or psychiatrist, centre staff will facilitate this via referral.

Referrals to access a centre are not required, but are welcome from GPs, health professionals and other community services.

Some centres require an appointment, so it is best to check ahead.

For more information and advice, GPs and patients can call the Head to Health Assessment and Referral Phone Service, which is staffed by clinicians, on 1800 595 212.

More information about the centres and opening hours is available [here](#).

Funded by the Australian Government, the Gosnells and Mirrabooka services were commissioned by WA Primary Health Alliance and are operated by St John of God Social Outreach, part of St John of God Health Care.

## Alcohol. Think Again - resources for health professionals



The new Alcohol. Think Again Australian Alcohol Guidelines campaign aims to increase awareness of the national alcohol guideline for healthy adults, and what constitutes a standard drink.

Resources, training and information for health professionals to help prevent and reduce alcohol-related harm is available along with downloadable social media assets to share across your practice channels are available [here](#)

Contact [alcoholprograms@cancerwa.asn.au](mailto:alcoholprograms@cancerwa.asn.au) or the Mental Health Commission via the Alcohol. Think Again [website](#) if you have any queries.

## Evidence based advice for parents on the developmental milestones for three year olds

The Child and Adolescent Health Service in collaboration with the Western Australian Country Health Service, the Department of Education and the Child and Parent Centres have created a six-minute video to inform parents and caregivers of the developmental milestones most three-year-old children will be meeting.

The video also encourages parents/caregivers who may have concerns with their child's development, to contact their GP, community health nurse or the Child Development Service for follow up and review.

View and share the video with your patients [here](#)



## New MBS items to facilitate mental health case conferencing



New Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) items are now available to facilitate mental health case conferences for patients being treated by psychiatrists, psychologists and GPs through the MBS (Better Access) initiative or an eating disorder treatment and management plan (EDTMP).

On 1 July 2023, 21 new MBS items were made available for eligible providers to organise and coordinate or participate in case conferences to discuss a patient's mental health care, where:

- The patient has been referred for Better Access services or has an active EDTMP.
- A GP, other medical practitioner (OMP), consultant psychiatrist or consultant paediatrician organises and coordinates the case conference.
- At least two other members of the multidisciplinary case conference team attend the case conference.
- The patient agrees to the case conference taking place and to the participation of all practitioners in the conference.

The criteria to claim MBS items 723 and 732 (GPs), and 230 and 233 (OMPs), have also been expanded to allow GPs and OMPs to develop and review Team Care Arrangements for patients being treated under Better Access or an EDTMP.

Further information on the new and amended MBS items is available in explanatory note [AN.0.47](#), [AN.7.17](#), [AN.15.1](#), [AN.15.2](#), [AN.7.32](#), [MN.7.6](#) on MBS Online, as well as the factsheet Mental Health Case Conferencing available at [www.mbsonline.gov.au](http://www.mbsonline.gov.au).

## 2023 guideline assessing and managing cardiovascular disease risk

A new 2023 Australian Guideline brings together the latest evidence from multidisciplinary clinical and consumer groups to inform guideline recommendations for the assessment and management of CVD risk.

The development of the guideline and associated CVD risk calculator is the first update in over a decade and was led by the Heart Foundation on behalf of the Australian Chronic Disease Prevention Alliance, represented in this project by Diabetes Australia, Kidney Health Australia and Stroke Foundation.

The guideline enables assessment and early identification of CVD risk in people aged 45 years to 79 years without known CVD (from 30 years for First Nations people and from 35 years for people with diabetes).

Access an overview of the guideline [here](#), along with the following accompanying resources:

- Aus CVD Risk Calculator – [cvdcheck.org.au/calculator](http://cvdcheck.org.au/calculator)
- Guideline summary infographic – [cvdcheck.org.au/for-health-professionals](http://cvdcheck.org.au/for-health-professionals)
- Guideline resource for the public – [cvdcheck.org.au/for-the-general-public](http://cvdcheck.org.au/for-the-general-public)

## Special MJA supplement on vital role of education to grow Australia's rural health workforce

The Office of the National Rural Health Commissioner has partnered with the Medical Journal of Australia to produce a special supplement that shines a light on the important role education plays in developing and growing Australia's regional, rural, and remote health workforce.

The supplement is available on the [Medical Journal of Australia's website](#) and through Wiley Online Library.

## New support line for parents with perinatal mental health concerns

ForWhen is a new national perinatal and infant mental health care-navigation phone line that can connect your patients experiencing moderate to severe perinatal mental health concerns to critical mental health services and supports.

In WA, this service is provided by Ngala perinatal mental health clinical navigators, who can expertly triage and screen your patients, and recommend specific perinatal services and supports to meet their needs. Referring GPs are kept up to date on course of action and clinical navigators can stay in touch with your patient until they are connected to the recommended service.

You can refer or your patients can self-refer simply by calling 1300 24 23 22 or via the [contact us](#) on the website. Visit the [website](#) or download a copy of the flyer for your patients [here](#)

The ForWhen model is a stepped care model which aligns with the Primary Health Network stepped care approach. Using the [mental health IAR tool](#), our target group is finding suitable services for those in Levels 2-4. ForWhen is not a crisis service.

## Take part in the PaRIS Health Survey to improve chronic disease care

The Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care invites general practices to take part in the PaRIS (Patient-Reported Indicator Survey) Health Survey. By taking part in this international research, practices will learn about their patients' experiences, how they compare to other practices and opportunities to improve their patient care. The survey will also support evidence-based quality improvement in primary care at a national level and contribute to international learning.

Practices will receive their results through a personalised interactive dashboard, along with advice on interpreting and using the data. Survey participation can also count towards continuing professional development requirements.

Find out more and register [here](#). Survey closes 31 October.

## GP Education and events



## Community of clinical learning practice for rare diseases

Did you know that 8 per cent of Aussies have a rare disease? That is approximately 2 million people.

The Rare Disease Awareness, Education, Support and Training (RAREST) Project invites GPs to join their community of clinical learning practice.

They hold monthly, interactive, case-based webinars for practical advice on caring for people living with a rare disease.

This CPD opportunity is funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care.

Register to participate [here](#)

Read more about helping your patients to cope with rare diseases in the [September 2022 Clinical Feature](#) from Dr Elizabeth Palmer, Clinical Geneticist and investigator on the RAREST Project.

HealthPathways WA also provides locally relevant guidance on assessment, management and referral in the [Rare Diseases pathway](#).



## ASHM Panel Discussion - Preventing Congenital Syphilis

This session for GPs, GP registrars, nurse practitioners and other health professionals working in the primary care setting, will run through opportunities to consider strategies and models of care when aiding populations at extreme risk of congenital syphilis.

Find out more and register [here](#)

**Date:** Tuesday 29 August

**Time:** 7.00pm-8.30pm (AWST)

## What can I upload to my patient's My Health Record?

Not sure how to upload information to My Health Record? Do you know when to upload a shared health summary or an event summary? Are your prescription records being uploaded? Join the Australian Digital Health Agency for this webinar to gain confidence in uploading documents to My Health Record.

**Date:** Thursday 24 August

**Time:** 10.00am - 10:30am (AWST)

Register for the webinar [here](#)

## Easily finding the right document in My Health Record

Looking for the most recent pathology report in your patient's My Health Record? Not sure what regular medicines your patient is taking or their immunisation history? Do you want to quickly locate a discharge summary from the patient's recent hospital stay?

Join the Australian Digital Health Agency session to learn how to use My Health Record and easily find information using clinical software. Learn how to view clinical documents and overviews using clinical software training environment.

**Date:** Tuesday 5 September

**Time:** 10:00am -10:30am (AWST)

Register for the webinar [here](#)

## Understanding My Health Record and patient privacy

How do you feel about talking to your patients about My Health Record? Do you know how they can easily access it on their own and what information can be uploaded by your organisation?

This session from the Australian Digital Health Agency will help you understand how patients can control access to their My Health Record, what information they can view and build your confidence in responding to patient questions.

**Date:** Wednesday August 30

**Time:** 9.30am - 10:00am (AWST)

Register for the webinar [here](#)

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