

GP Connect

Keeping GPs informed in the changing primary health landscape



20 July 2023

Supporting general practice to provide a disaster response

WA Primary Health Alliance (WAPHA) has been successful in Round One of the Disaster Ready Fund, receiving a grant to explore defining the role of general practice in disaster response.

The Fund will support future planning to ensure communities are better prepared, less exposed and in the best possible position to recover when disasters strike.

WAPHA Executive General Manager Primary Care Innovation & Development, Bernadette Kenny, said recent disasters have demonstrated that there is a need to define the role of general practitioners in disaster response.

“The Disaster Ready Fund allows WAPHA to explore the capacity and role of general practice and primary care in WA in the context of disaster and health response.

“WAPHA is the only Primary Health Network to receive a grant in Australia within this first round of funding. It’s important that we take advantage of this opportunity to consult with our stakeholders and create a model that considers the diverse health landscape and unique challenges within WA,” she said.

GP and Australian National University Associate Professor, Dr Penny Burns, has been working, researching, and teaching in the field of disasters now for over a decade and said GPs are well placed to play a key role in disaster health care.



“GPs are local health professionals who are in the community caring for their patients through all stages of ‘Prevent Prepare Recover’ respond activities.

“They are working in the community before disasters strike and remain after other outside responders leave. During the response they can contribute to disaster health care for affected locals, and provide coordination and continuity of care, particularly for those with chronic conditions.

“The role of GPs and how they fit within, and communicate with, the broader health care response requires careful integration into planning well before any disaster. Integration of GPs as a part of the healthcare team response has the potential to improve community health resilience, and should enhance support and safety of local GPs

“WAPHA’s project will help provide a clear role for GPs in disaster response and is an important step in the efficient inclusion of general practice healthcare in disasters,” she said.

WAPHA will be reaching out to GPs and other stakeholders once the project is underway. There will be various opportunities for stakeholders to help inform the model design as we explore what the role of GPs in disaster response may look like. More information on the Australian Government’s Disaster Ready Fund is available [here](#).

Clinical Updates

Extended diversion of NMHS gastroenterology elective waitlist cases to EMHS until 30 September 2023

Given the ongoing success of the redirection of North Metropolitan Health Service (NMHS) referrals to East Metropolitan Health Service (EMHS) for specific endoscopy procedures, the agreement between the two health service providers will continue until 30 September 2023 (may be extended to 31 December).

This extended diversion will assist NMHS in managing the high demand for endoscopy procedures within its catchment and improve access times.

It will continue to include referrals for flexible sigmoidoscopy, diagnostic gastroscopy, diagnostic colonoscopy, and both diagnostic gastroscopy and colonoscopy. These cases will be redirected to either Kalamunda Hospital or Armadale Hospital.

The diversion will also continue to apply for patients residing in the NMHS postcodes 6005, 6006, 6007, 6008, 6016, 6017, 6050, 6059, 6060, 6061, 6062, 6066, and 6090.

Referrals should continue to be sent via the Central Referral Service, using the [referral form](#).

Medical Benefits Schedule access for nurse practitioners

From 1 July 2024, the Australian Government will increase the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) fees and rebates for nurse practitioner general attendance items by 30 per cent. This will assist eligible nurse practitioners to support general practices to deliver services for Australians under Medicare.

In an effort to bring providers together to better support patients with chronic conditions, eligibility for nurse practitioners to participate in MBS subsidised multidisciplinary case conferences will be expanded. More information is available at [MBS online](#)

Amendment to restrictions for prescribing of MS-2 Step

The Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) approved amended restrictions on the prescribing of MS-2 Step on 11 July 2023. The PBS will reflect these changes, effective 1 August 2023.

Previously, medical practitioners were required to register and be certified to prescribe MS-2 Step and pharmacists had to register to dispense it. These additional regulatory steps meant only one in 10 medical practitioners can prescribe MS-2 Step and one in 10 pharmacists can dispense it.

The TGA has expanded prescribing to any healthcare practitioner with appropriate qualifications and training (e.g., nurse practitioners and authorised midwives). However, current WA legislation restricts the provision of abortions to medical practitioners only, superseding the TGA amendment.

The TGA has also removed the requirement for prescribers and dispensers to be registered with the MS-2 Step Prescribing Program – this change is applicable in WA.

For more information, see the [TGA website](#)

Change to how ODT medicines are listed on the PBS Schedule

As of July 1 2023, the way in which opioid dependence treatment (ODT) medicines are listed on the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) Schedule has changed. ODT medicines are now part of the Section 100 [Highly Specialised Drugs \(HSD\) Program](#) (Community Access) arrangements. This means patients eligible for a Medicare card who meet the criteria for opioid dependence will pay the [PBS co-payment](#) of \$30 or \$7.30 with a concession card for up to 28 days supply per pharmaceutical benefit prescribed. This will also contribute towards their PBS Safety Net threshold. ODT medicines currently listed on the PBS Schedule include:

- methadone oral liquid
- buprenorphine sublingual tablets
- buprenorphine + naloxone sublingual films
- long-acting injectable buprenorphine products.

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



Supporting your patients with dementia to stay Safe & Found

The Safe & Found program supports people living with dementia or a cognitive impairment who might be at risk of becoming lost or reported as missing, by ensuring Police have immediate access to critical information to assist when undertaking search operations.

Safe & Found WA is an initiative introduced by Western Australia Police Force and Australia Medic Alert Foundation.

More information is available to share with families and carers of your patients with dementia who may be concerned about people in their care going missing at www.safeandfound.org.au. Email enquiry@safeandfound.org.au or phone 1800 88 22 22. The Program is provided for an [annual fee](#).

Guidance for clinicians on assessment, management, and referral of patients with dementia can be found on the recently reviewed '[Dementia HealthPathway](#)'.

RACGP MBS tool update

The RACGP's [MBS online tool](#) has been updated to incorporate the latest rebate changes which came into effect on 1 July, including 3.6 per cent indexation. GPs can now enter their own fee for each service and automatically calculate the patient out-of-pocket contribution.

New GP MBS items for [mental health case conferencing](#) have been added to the [expanded guide](#) and [full guide](#).

Decommissioning the My Aged Care fax

The Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care will be decommissioning the My Aged Care fax number (1800 728 174) on 31 July 2023.

The e-Referral option from within your patient's electronic medical record is the quickest and easiest way to make a referral.

If your practice does not currently use a compatible practice management system, you can use the online make a referral form. This is also available on the "[Aged Care Assessment pathway](#)" on HealthPathways WA

More information is available on HealthPathways WA or the [My Aged Care website](#). Any queries should be directed to MyAgedCareFaxDecommission@health.gov.au

This change is in line with the Australian Government's Digital Government Strategy to have all government services available digitally by 2025.

More information is available via the [Aged Care Assessment HealthPathway](#).

Immunisation for individuals with additional needs: Practical guide

The National Centre for Immunisation Research and Surveillance (NCIRS) has produced a practical guide to support immunisation providers to vaccinate individuals with additional needs.

The guide provides practical advice including clinical considerations, practice adjustments and what to do next if vaccination was not successful.

Visit the [NCIRS website](#) to view and download the supported vaccination guide.

New online syphilis decision-making tool

With [syphilis cases rising across the country](#), the Australasian Society for HIV, Viral Hepatitis and Sexual Health Medicine (ASHM) has launched a new interactive syphilis decision-making tool to guide clinicians through testing and treating syphilis.

The free decision-making tool is available online and includes treatment pathways for [pregnant women, a priority population group of growing concern](#).

For further information, visit the [syphilis decision-making tool](#) webpage.

TGA addressing Ryzodeg 70/30 FlexTouch insulin prefilled pens shortage

To help manage the shortage of Ryzodeg 70/30 FlexTouch insulin prefilled pens, the TGA has implemented a [Serious Scarcity Substitution Instrument \(SSSI\)](#) as follows:

- Ryzodeg 70/30 FlexTouch declared as a scarce medicine.
- Ryzodeg 70/30 Penfill is specified as the substitute medicine as per the substitution protocol included in the SSSI.

More information is available on the [TGA website](#).



Funded medically necessary transport for aged pensioners

The Australian Government Department of Health and Aged Care has funded Wilson Medic One to provide medically necessary planned community transport at no cost to eligible patients. Services include:

- Hospital to home.
- Home to hospital
- Home to a medical facility
- Transport between medical and aged care facilities.

Eligible community patients who are in receipt of an aged pension receive a free transport service, with 100 per cent of the cost met by the Australian Government. Eligible community patients who are not in receipt of an aged pension are required to pay 50 per cent of the cost of transport, with the remaining 50 per cent met by the Australian Government.

A range of vehicles to accommodate differing patient transport needs are available, including cars, wheelchair accessible vehicles and stretcher vehicles. Staff all hold nationally recognised qualifications from qualified patient transport officers to AHPRA registered paramedics.

Bookings for patient transport can be pre-booked or booked on the day by calling 1300 284 940. For more information visit wilsonmedicone.com.au or email info@wilsonmedicone.com.au

Check out the GP education events on page 6 or visit wapha.org.au/events



Project update

The HealthPathways WA team often gets suggestions for pathway developments and questions about how we maintain and grow our library of over 650 clinical, non-clinical and referral pathways.

When prioritising the development and review schedule for the following year, a number of factors are considered including:

- Data (including pathway views and search terms).
- Clinical risk (including changes to guidelines and legislation).
- Pathways due for their minimum 3-yearly review.
- Public health priorities
- Suggestions, recommendations, and feedback from across the health network.

2023 has been focussed on reviewing live pathways to maintain currency of best practice and referral information with only critical new pathway developments progressed.

From Jan 1 to June 30, 2023, 54 full pathway reviews and 3 new developments have been completed across a range of clinical streams. This is in addition to 317 partial pathway updates.

Feedback on existing pathways is always welcome and can be submitted via the “send feedback” button on the bottom right (mobile-friendly view) or top right (classic view) of the relevant pathway.

HealthPathways WA is a free, password protected, online portal that provides clear guidance for GPs on the current best practice for assessing, managing, and referring patients across WA.

To request access to HealthPathways, click [here](#).

For more information about HealthPathways (including the development process and how to get involved), visit the [WAPHA website](#).

WA Health consultation on genetics in primary care

The WA Department of Health and Genetic Services of Western Australia (GSWA) invite primary care providers to participate in a public consultation about the future state of genetic service delivery in WA.

GSWA are keen to hear from GPs, other primary care health professionals and non-GP specialists about their experience ordering genetic tests such as non-invasive prenatal testing (NIPT) and/or managing patients with genetic conditions via WA Health’s [Clinician and Support Service survey](#).

This survey is anonymous and takes approximately 10 minutes to complete

Online focus group

Date: Tuesday 29 August

Time: 7.00-8.30 PM (AWST)

GPs who order genetic tests such as NIPT and/or manage patients with genetic conditions are invited to register to attend a focus group about the current and future role of primary care in the provision of clinical genetics services in WA. The discussion will focus on the opportunities and priorities for GSWA, but participants do not have to refer to GSWA to be eligible to attend.

Places are limited so please register to participate [here](#)

GPs can claim self-logged CPD points and receive remuneration for attending the online focus group.

Visit the [WA Department of Health website](#) to find out more about the project and other ways you can participate

GP experience - Medication titration survey

Sir Charles Gairdner Osborne Park Health Care Group is undertaking a quality improvement activity to understand GPs experience in titrating heart failure medications. Please consider participating in an online survey regarding your experience, which will take less than two minutes to complete.

Complete the survey [here](#)

GP Education and events

SHQ intimate partner violence and reproductive coercion and abuse education

Intimate partner violence (IPV) and reproductive coercion and abuse (RCA) are very common in Australia, with one study finding rates of 37 per cent amongst general practice patients. IPV/RCA impacts the lives of many women and families and primary care doctors can play a vital role in recognising, responding, and referring patients in need of support.

SHQ has developed RACGP/ACCRM approved, self-paced eLearning designed to meet the needs of busy doctors wanting to build the confidence and skills needed to recognise the signs IPV/RCA and offer appropriate support to their patients. The course consists of six modules, each taking approximately one hour to complete, with future opportunities for further professional development and ongoing access to exclusive resources produced by SHQ. The course is available at no cost to doctors based in the Perth metro area who register by 31 July 2023.

Access the course [here](#).

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
Wednesday 27 September
Time: 9.30am - 10:00am (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 webinar 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: Thursday 27 July
Time: 9.00am - 9:30am (AWST)

Register for the webinar [here](#)

Finding medicines information in My Health Record

Are you finding it difficult to reconcile what medicines your patient is currently taking? This Australian Digital Health Agency webinar will explain which views and documents available in My Health Record can be accessed to obtain more information about the patient's regular medicines or medical history.

You will learn how best to interpret the information available and navigate My Health Record to help you find medicines information quickly and easily when you need it.

Date: Thursday 3 August
Time: 10.00am - 10:30am (AWST)

Register for the webinar [here](#)



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