

PALLIATIVE CARE: TELEHEALTH VIDEO-CONSULTATIONS

Information for GPs and Specialists

Telehealth aims to make it easier for Australians who have difficulty getting to a specialist, or who live in rural and remote areas. By using electronic and telecommunications technologies, telehealth enables patients to consult with health-care professionals without having to travel long distances.

The Barwon Health Palliative Care Program is committed to providing care to patients and their families within the Barwon South West Region. A consultation with a Palliative Care Physician by video may be a suitable option for your patient. The video-consultation can happen while the patient is at home, or into your clinic or rooms with you or a practice nurse present.

Using this service

We encourage patients to speak to their doctor before seeking advice from a Specialist. If you support their request, we would appreciate your **medical referral** for a telehealth video-consultation. If it is clinically appropriate and the patient meets the eligibility tests,, when the Palliative Care office receives your referral, we will contact you or your staff to book an appointment.

The consultation can be in the patient's home, or in your clinic or rooms.

Wherever you are, you will need:

- A computer with a web camera (built in or add on)
- A microphone (built in or add on) and / or telephone
- A reliable internet connection
- An email address

Some simple set-up instructions and a consent form will be sent to the nominated email address and one of our staff will test your equipment and set-up with you before your first appointment.

If your patient has special needs such as an **interpreter**, or would like their GP, other Specialist, Practice Nurse, Nurse Practitioner or other health professional to join the consultation, please let us know so we can help arrange a time that suits everybody.

If you have a question, or need help before, during or after the telehealth video-consultation, please ask our staff.



What will I need to do on the day?

This will vary depending on the location of the appointment. Our staff will provide you with specific instructions before your appointment.

- If the patient is at home, they should check that their computer, internet connection, speakers, microphone and camera are all turned on and working.
- If appointment is in your clinic our staff will liaise directly with you or your staff about the set-up. The patient only needs to arrive at your clinic prior to the allocated time ready for the appointment.

Please be ready at the scheduled time of the consultation.

- As with other health-related appointments, clinics often run behind time and the patient may have to wait before the doctor joins the appointment.
- Be ready anyway, you will hear when the doctor starts your consultation.

A telehealth video-consultation is like any other appointment with a doctor. Try to:

- avoid any possible interruptions to your appointment (staff, noise, distractions),
- speak as clearly as possible, and
- look at the screen.

Please have your phone turned on and handy. We will call you if there are any problems.

IMPORTANT: If you or the patient is unable to attend the appointment, **please call us to cancel or reschedule.**

Who will be part of the consultation?

At the start of the appointment we will introduce everyone in the room and ask you to do the same. As with a face-to-face consultation, there may be students, trainees or other staff in the consultation. You or the patient can always ask for them to leave at any time.

The patient is also welcome to have anyone with them.

If the patient wishes to speak privately with the Palliative Care Physician, they can ask any other people present to leave the room.

What about privacy?

As with a face-to-face consultation:

- No one (including the patient, GP/Specialist or us) may record the consultation without written consent by all involved.
- You will be emailed a consent form that we will ask the patient to sign and return prior to the video-consultation.
- We will keep a written record of the consultation and this will go in to the patient's Barwon Health medical record.



What about follow up?

The patient will be offered a follow-up appointment or investigations as needed, this could be by video-consultation again, in person or with their GP or Specialist.

What if the patient is not happy with the consultation?

As with any consultation, if the patient is not happy with the clinical outcome or decisions, they can always ask to see another doctor or seek a second opinion. If the patient doesn't like the style of a video-consultation they are always welcome to choose face-to-face consultations in future. They may also ask to stop the video-consultation at any time.

The choice is always theirs – a video-consultation is just one option for the patient.

Are there any charges?

There is no cost to you from the Barwon Health Palliative Care Program for use of the telehealth video-consultation service. Please inform your patient if they might incur any out-of-pocket expenses from your involvement in their telehealth video-consultation. Both the Palliative Care Physician and the GP or other Specialist may bill Medicare. If eligible, we will ask for the patient's consent to bill Medicare. This request will be by email.

How can I give feedback?

Please ask the patient to complete the online survey that they will be sent after their first telehealth video-consultation. It is very important and useful to us and the future of telehealth video-consultations that they share their experiences. We may also send a clinician specific online survey to collect feedback regarding your own experience of the telehealth service.

We are interested in any feedback about our service and encourage you to provide this, either verbally or in writing. Staff will assist you with this process to ensure that feedback reaches relevant staff, if desired. This will be managed in a confidential way.

The following options are available:

- Contact the Barwon Health Palliative Care Manager on **T 03 4215 5700**, or
- Contact the Barwon Health Consumer Liaison Officer on **T 03 4215 1250** or mail
Barwon Health
Safety & Quality Unit
PO Box 281
Geelong VIC 3220

