

27 June 2019

MBS Review Taskforce  
[MBSReviews@health.gov.au](mailto:MBSReviews@health.gov.au)

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Re: Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) Review Taskforce open consultation – MBS and telehealth**

The Australasian Telehealth Society (ATHS) was formed in 2008, with a vision to deliver a united 'voice' for telehealth advancement and covering a broad range of domains including the health sector, academic institutions, government and industry partners. Our society has a membership representing all states and territories in Australia.

The ATHS asks the MBS Review Taskforce to consider the following recommendations on MBS items relevant to telehealth when making recommendations to the Government.

1. Loading

We recommend the 50% telehealth loading for specialist video consultations be maintained for at least a 10 year period to ensure sustained growth in telehealth services on a national basis. The loading acknowledges the costs associated with establishing and operating new telehealth services and the time required for the service to be routinely integrated as a business as usual activity.

2. Bundled payments for health care homes

We recommend that health care homes bundled payments have:

- an additional loading for remote patient monitoring.
- an additional loading for video consultations (GP-to-patient).
- an additional loading for GP attendance at video consultation with the patient and a specialist.

3. Chronic Disease Management - Individual Allied Health Services

We recommend that MBS rebateable allied health services provided under the Chronic Disease Management plan are deliverable by telehealth.

4. GP payments for telehealth

We recommend that when a GP attends a video consultation with the patient in his/her surgery and a specialist working in the public hospital system that the GP be able to claim a MBS consultation regardless of whether the specialist is claiming a MBS consultation. Currently guidelines would preclude a GP from claiming a MBS consultation item which is a disincentive for the GP to participate in telehealth.

Rationale:

The AHS congratulate the Australian Government on the provision of funding for specialist video consultations through the MBS. Since the funding was initially introduced in 2011-12, the volume of telehealth services provided throughout Australia has increased over time. Whilst the number of telehealth consultations has changed from around 70k per year in 2012-13 to 170k in 2017-18; the rate of growth in 2012-13 was 116% compared to 3% in 2017-18. In order to maintain and encourage increased uptake of telehealth, there is an important need for policy adjustments and a sustained commitment for telehealth funding in Australia.

We note that the international evidence for the benefits of remote monitoring for the management of chronic conditions in the community is strong and that the CSIRO National Telehealth study funded by the NBN and the DOH showed that one year;

- Rate of expenditure on medical services fell by 46%
- Rate of unscheduled admissions to hospital fell by 53.2%
- Length of stay fell by 70-76%
- Mortality was reduced by 45-48%

This was achieved with a high level of acceptance from patients and clinicians alike

- >83% user acceptance and use of telemonitoring technology
- 89% of clinicians would recommend telemonitoring services to other patients

Based on these robust data the AHS strongly supports the inclusion of at home telemonitoring as part of the bundled payments for healthcare homes and rebateable health services under the Chronic Disease Management Plan supports healthcare. It brings researchers, telehealth practitioners, clinicians and industry partners together in a unique interdisciplinary grouping. It is the only Australasian organisation specifically addressing the needs of the telehealth community.

Sincerely,



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