



# Central West Gippsland

Division of General Practice

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## Update on Telehealth Nov 2011

### Summary

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#### ***Aim: for GPs' patients to consult specialists via video conferencing rather than travelling***

- \$6,000 incentive payment per GP until June 2012 (then decreases) for first consultation via videoconference
- Increased consultation fees are ongoing
- Existing internet connection and equipment appropriate for many consultations
- No sign up process
- The incentives are linked to provider numbers, not practices
- The GP practice does not have to be PIP accredited
- A practice nurse can represent the GP for part of the consultation

#### **Background**

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Since 1 July this year, financial incentives have been available to GPs (including registrars) outside an inner metropolitan centre who make it possible for patients to participate in a video conference with a specialist at another location.

According to Medicare, there has been a small uptake by general practice; however the advice we received from DoHA and RACGP was not to rush into providing this service until more guidance was available.

RACGP has now released its Standards for general practices offering video consultations as an addendum to the RACGP Standards for general practices (4<sup>th</sup> edition). This includes additional explanatory notes on 23 existing criteria from the Standards which have been deemed to be of particular significance for safety and quality in a video consultation context between a patient and a specialist at a distant location.

This document can be accessed at [www.racgp.org.au/standards/telehealth](http://www.racgp.org.au/standards/telehealth). RACGP undertook to send practices a hard copy by the end of October.

RACGP has also released a new version of its Telehealth Implementation Guide, after reviewing the first version released in August, and will shortly release an updated version of its Computer Security Guidelines.

#### **Incentives for GPs**

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Telehealth On-Board	Once only lump sum payment for GPs who provide at least	<b>\$6,000</b>
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	one telehealth service. Unaudited – you do not have to spend it all on infrastructure.	(Reducing to \$3,300 in 2014/15)
Telehealth service (patient end)	Ongoing, quarterly payment based on number of telehealth consults during quarterly period. Also linked to provider number	\$40 (Reducing to \$22 in 2014/15)
Telehealth bulkbilling	Paid each time a service is bulk billed	\$20 (Reducing to \$11 in 2014/15)
Increased payment for telehealth consults	C level consult	\$91.35

### Example

25 minute consult via videoconference by GP

- Level C Telehealth Consult \$91.35
- Telehealth Bulk Bill Incentive \$20.00
- Telehealth Service Incentive \$40.00 (paid quarterly)

**TOTAL \$151.35**

### Points to Note

- The incentives are linked to provider numbers, not practices.
- The practice in which the GP works does not have to be PIP accredited.
- A practice nurse or Aboriginal health worker can represent the GP for part of the consultation
- You can bill another consultation with the same patient on the same day – the times must be specified

### Requirements

- Government is not mandating or endorsing any particular technical solution.
- Requirements are:
  - Sufficient video quality for the clinical service being provided
  - Sufficient security for normal privacy requirements for health information
  - Privacy legislation has no specifications other than requiring “reasonable steps to ensure security and quality”.

DoHA has released guidelines for technical and privacy specifications for clinicians. These guidelines appear to set minimum standards as shown in the table below.

	<b>Specifications</b>	<b>Quality</b>
Hardware	Webcam with auto focus and minimum 10x optical zoom ratio  e.g. Microsoft LifeCam Studio or Logitech HD Pro Webcam C910	These inexpensive webcams meet the minimum requirements for both non diagnostic and diagnostic quality videoconferencing consultations
Software + bandwidth	Skype™ + ADSL2	ADSL2 provides the minimum upload bandwidth required for Skype™ to deliver the required quality for non diagnostic quality videoconferencing consultations
Security	Create specialised account for practice if using software product such as Skype™. Avoid use of personal Skype™ accounts	Read 'Skype Security' for details regarding digital identity, authentication and encryption.
	Verify caller prior to engagement in Consult	Messages transmitted through a Skype™ session are encrypted from Skype-end to Skype-end. You can be confident the call is secure once you have verified the other Skype™ user

There have been concerns raised about using Skype:

- The session is encrypted, but data relating to the session is not encrypted (eg:address book and call history )
- Despite encryption, no ISP will guarantee its clinical safety
- Not interoperable with other services
- Potential for spam video calls
- No support

There are other methods of achieving a setup capable of diagnostic quality videoconferencing, e.g. using hardware such as Polycom™ (around \$4,000to set up plus support costs).

However all these methods require users to have the same equipment installed and setup is costly and complex.

## Further Information

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### Telehealth Incentive Payments

<http://www.medicareaustralia.gov.au/provider/incentives/telehealth.jsp>

### Telehealth MBS item numbers (search under 'T' for Telehealth)

[www.mbsonline.gov.au](http://www.mbsonline.gov.au)

### Guidance on Security, Privacy and Technical Specifications for Clinicians

<http://www.mbsonline.gov.au/internet/mbsonline/publishing.nsf/Content/connectinghealthservices-technicalstandards>

### RACGP Support

RACGP has a range of resources available online, including a telehealth addendum to the 4th edition of its Standards for General Practice.

Phone: 1800 257 053

[www.racgp.org.au/standards/telehealth](http://www.racgp.org.au/standards/telehealth)

[www.racgp.org.au/telehealth](http://www.racgp.org.au/telehealth)

Email: <mailto:telehealth@racgp.org.au>

### Staff of the RACGP e-health unit:

- Judy Evans, Manager e-health
- Camilla Preston, Senior Project Officer (Telehealth Standards project team)

### Skype

<https://support.skype.com/en/faq/FA1417/>

### How-much-bandwidth-does-Skype-need

<http://www.skype.com/intl/en-us/security/>

**Disclaimer:** This information has been gathered from a number of sources to keep you up to date with opinions and developments around Telehealth. Central West Gippsland Division of General Practice does not take responsibility for the accuracy of information from external. CWDDoGP acknowledges Central Victoria General Practice Network as the source for some of this information. We emphasise the need to obtain technical advice for your infrastructure and consult all available guidelines before undertaking Telehealth consultations.