



Australian Government

Medicare Australia

Indefinite referrals

When to write one

General practitioners are entitled to write indefinite referrals for the ongoing treatment of patients with chronic conditions. Specialists and consultant physicians are reminded to accept the validity of indefinite referrals and not to make unnecessary requests to referring practitioners for new referrals.

Referrals from GPs are valid for 12 months, unless the referring practitioner indicates the referral is for a period more or less than 12 months, for example, three, six or 18 months or valid indefinitely. Referrals from specialists and consultant physicians are valid for three months.

An indefinite referral is appropriate where a chronically ill patient is in the continuing care and management of a specialist or consultant physician for a specific condition, for example, glaucoma. If an indefinite referral is already in existence, the specialist should not request a new referral and a referring practitioner should not issue one, unless a new condition has developed.

If the patient develops a new problem, it is appropriate for a new referral to be provided. An initial attendance related to the second condition would then be possible. An example would be a patient being reviewed regularly for glaucoma who develops a pterygium requiring surgery.

The renewal of a referral for the same condition does not indicate the start of a new course of treatment where the specialist can itemise another initial consultation. In the continuing management/treatment situation, the new referral is to facilitate the payment of benefits at the specialist or consultant referred rates, rather than the unreferred rates.

For more information go to www.mbsonline.gov.au

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