

Better Access to Mental Health Care Initiative



The Better Access to Mental Health Care initiative aims to increase community access to general practitioners, psychiatrists, clinical psychologists and other allied mental health professionals for mental health care. The Better Access initiative includes three new Medicare item numbers for GPs providing mental health care:

- GP Mental Health Care Plan (2710)
- GP Mental Health Care Plan Review (2712)
- GP Mental Health Care Consultation (2713)

Better Access also provides GPs with new referral pathways to/for:

Training & Education

Up to January 2010 the following information is correct: There will be *no mandatory training* requirements for GPs to claim the MBS item numbers listed above or for GPs to refer patients through the new Better Access initiative.

However, it is strongly recommended that GPs providing mental health care using the new GP Mental Health Care items have completed appropriate mental health training, such as training recognised through the General Practice Mental Health Standards Collaboration. Level 1 and/or Level 2 training *continues to be required* for GPs providing Focussed Psychological Strategies (FPS).

Access to Allied Health Professionals

As part of the GP Mental Health Care Plan GPs can refer patients for a limited number (up to 12) of counselling sessions. These can be provided by private allied health practitioners registered with Medicare Australia, Access to Allied Health Professionals (ATAPS) programs run through Divisions of General Practice or appropriately trained GPs.

There are two options for referrals through the Better Access initiative:

Psychological Therapies

These can be provided by Clinical Psychologists (registered with Medicare Australia) and include Psycho-education, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy and other evidence-based therapies as considered clinically relevant.

Focussed Psychological Strategies (FPS)

These can be provided by Psychologists, Social Workers (with mental health training), Occupational Therapists (with mental health training) - all require to be registered with Medicare Australia, and appropriately trained GPs.

Appropriately trained (Level 2) GPs are encouraged to provide evidence based Focussed Psychological Strategies (FPS) through the provision of Medicare Benefits Schedule Items (MBS).

FPS include: Psycho-education, Cognitive Behavioural Therapy, Relaxation Strategies, Skills Training and Interpersonal Therapy.

Training

For GPs to be able to access item numbers for the provision of focussed psychological strategies they must be Level 2 Registered with the General Practice Mental Health Standards Collaboration. This means they must have completed both Level 1 and Level 2 Training.

Access to Psychiatrist Support

GPs can refer patients to private psychiatrists if clinically relevant for an assessment & the development of a management plan in place of the GP item numbers.

Psychiatrists have access to three MBS Item Numbers for this process:

- Assessment and development of the Mental Health Management Plan (291)
- Review of the Management Plan (293)
- Initial Consultation (296)



GP Psych Support

This component remains unchanged and enables GPs to access psychiatrist advice and support.

GP Psych Support is a service providing access to urgent patient management advice from psychiatrists. The service is available to all GPs (not restricted to those registered with Better Outcomes) in Australia 24 hours a day, 7 days a week via phone, fax and email.

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