

From: [REDACTED]
To: [medboardconsultation](#)
Subject: RE: Medical Board telehealth guidelines consultation - SIRA Feedback
Date: Friday, 17 February 2023 4:01:24 PM
Attachments: [image001.png](#)

Dear Sir/Madam

Thank you for the invitation and opportunity for the State Insurance Regulatory Authority (SIRA) to provide feedback on the public consultation Draft revised Guidelines: Telehealth consultations with patients.

Upon review of the draft guidelines please find below our feedback.

Making a submission in the preliminary consultation

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1. Is the content and structure of the draft revised Guidelines: Telehealth consultations with patients helpful, clear, relevant and workable?

SIRA Feedback – Yes

2. Is there anything missing that needs to be added to the draft revised guidelines?

SIRA Feedback – Yes

Guidelines need include consideration regarding safety issues which may impact the patient when services are provided via telehealth vs face to face.

There also hasn't been any guidance included regarding the doctor seeking the patient's input as to whether they wish for the services to be provided via telehealth. Some patients may wish to attend a face to face appointment instead of a telehealth consultation. Patient preference therefore needs be a consideration.

Page 1: Summary Section comment

Practitioners should be continuously assessing the appropriateness of the telehealth consultation and whether a direct physical examination of the patient is necessary

SIRA Feedback – This needs be considered more broadly than just physical examinations. Medical practitioners do also provide treatment services that may require physical contact/physical presence

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Page 4: Introduction

Practitioners should be continuously assessing the appropriateness of the telehealth consultation and whether a direct physical examination of the patient is necessary.

SIRA Feedback – As above.

Page 4: Option 3

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Option three: Revise the guidance

In option three, the Board would merge and revise the existing Guidelines for technology-based consultations and an Information sheet - Inter-jurisdictional technology-based patient consultations that were published in 2012 and 2013 respectively. The Board considers this will be a low-cost high-impact option that will clarify the existing guidance and contribute to the safety of the community.

SIRA Feedback – SIRA supports this option as opposed to Options 1 and 2.

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Page 8: Definition of Telehealth

Telehealth can be used to provide, diagnosis, treatment, preventive and curative aspects of healthcare services.

SIRA Feedback: Can also be used for history taking. We acknowledge this does however form part of making a diagnosis, so may/ may not be mentioned separately.

- Page 8: Background

The standard of care provided in telehealth consultations may be limited by the lack of face-to-face, person to person interaction and capacity to undertake physical examinations.

SIRA Feedback – Need add: and provide hands on treatment (where appropriate)

Page 9: What do I need to do – Before a Telehealth consultation

3. Ensure steps have been taken to confirm your patient:

a. has access to the necessary technology and connectivity and can use the equipment to participate in the consultation

SIRA Feedback: Need consider adding that the medical practitioner has obtained the patient's consent if planning to record the consultation.

e. is aware that your clinical judgement, rather than their preference, will determine if the consultation occurs using telehealth or face-to-face and that this may change during the consultation. A patient cannot insist you provide a telehealth consultation to them if you consider it inappropriate to do so.

SIRA Feedback: Agree, but equally the doctor can't insist the consultation is provided via telehealth if the patient feels this is inappropriate or undesirable. Patient preference should be a consideration as mentioned earlier.

Safety aspects of the provision of services via telehealth vs face to face also need be a consideration. For example patients with mental health conditions who may become distressed during a consultation and lack the necessary supports if the service is provided remotely.

- Page 10: During the consultation

10. Continuously assess the appropriateness of using telehealth for the consultation and have appropriate arrangements for the patient to be seen face-to-face if necessary

SIRA Feedback – Same comment as above – the safety of service provision via this method needs be a key consideration. This is being inferred in the current wording but SIRA feels this needs be called out more clearly

Page 11: International Telehealth

You should also be aware, and inform your patients, of Medicare billing rules for telehealth where you or your patient are located outside of Australia.

SIRA Feedback - Additional considerations if the doctor is located outside of Australia when delivering these services include:

- whether their Medical Indemnity insurance covers them for the provision of services outside Australia, and
- whether they are required to be registered with the equivalent of AHPRA in the country they are based while providing these services.

Is a Medicare rebate appropriate in this situation? Are services provided in this way eligible for Medicare funding?

3. Do you have any other comments on the draft revised guidelines?

SIRA Feedback – No further comments

Additional information

There is a project currently underway whereby researchers from the University of Adelaide are undertaking research into the use of telehealth services by injured workers related to mental health injuries within the worker's compensation setting. The research will help to better understand what aspects of telehealth work well, what can be improved, and whether there are types of injured workers who are more, or less, likely to benefit from the provision of services via telehealth. The research is being jointly funded by the State Insurance Regulatory Authority (SIRA), WorkSafe Victoria and Comcare as part of the Australian and New Zealand Research Collaboration. The final report will be released towards the end of 2023.

Thank you again for providing the opportunity to provide feedback concerning these draft guidelines. If you require any further clarification with regards to the feedback provided, please contact David Leeson at [REDACTED]

Regards

David Leeson

Advisor Supervision | Clinical Standards and Practice | Health Policy, Prevention and Supervision
State Insurance Regulatory Authority

E [REDACTED]

sira.nsw.gov.au

Levels 14-15
231 Elizabeth Street
Sydney NSW 2000

Working days [REDACTED]



State Insurance
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I acknowledge the traditional custodians of the land and pay respects to Elders past and present. I also acknowledge all the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander staff working with NSW Government at this time