

*Template letter to complementary and alternative medicine (CAM) practitioners*

To prevent harm to patients, meet professional obligations, reduce medico-legal risk, and ensure appropriate use of the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS), GPs should only order medical imaging and pathology tests that are clinically indicated.

GPs occasionally receive requests from patients to order specific medical imaging or pathology tests that may or may not be appropriate in the management of the patient. Test requests arise from a variety of sources. CAM practitioners might advise patients that they can avoid paying for specific tests if they ask a GP to order them through Medicare.Requests also occur when patients research their symptoms and present at the clinic with a proposed course of action.

GPs may experience pressure to comply with these requests in order to preserve good relations with their patients. They may also be concerned about medico-legal liability that might stem from delayed diagnosis. However, there are various risks associated with ordering tests that are unlikely to be of clinical benefit.

The RACGP has developed this template letter to CAM practitioners to assist GPs in responding to these requests. For more information, please refer to the RACGPs position on [*Responding to patient requests for tests not considered clinically appropriate*](https://www.racgp.org.au/advocacy/position-statements/view-all-position-statements/clinical-and-practice-management/responding-to-patient-requests-for-tests)and its’ supporting material.

[Date]

Dear Sir/Madam,

**Re: [Patient’s name]**

Please note that I have declined to order the following diagnostic test/s for the patient:

• [Specific diagnostic test/s]

I write to explain why I have declined to order these tests.

* All health practitioners have a responsibility to safeguard patients’ wellbeing. Unnecessary testing can harm patients through out-of-pocket expense, inconvenience, anxiety, distress, and insurance exclusions and loadings. Perhaps the most harmful effect is the potential to expose patients to clinically inappropriate diagnoses and treatments.
* Under the requirements of the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS), any test that a GP orders through Medicare must be ‘clinically relevant’:1 that is, the GP (and his or her professional peers) must feel confident that the test is necessary to the patient’s treatment.
* GPs who order tests at the request of, or on behalf of, another practitioner place themselves at medico-legal risk, as they have a responsibility to review the results of all tests they order.

[Patient’s name] has been provided with some information on this subject.

It may be possible for you to order these tests for the patient. If you choose to do so, please be aware that you will need to inform the patient of the costs involved and follow up on the results.

Yours sincerely,

[GP’s name]

[GP’s title]

1 Australian Government Department of Health. Medicare Benefits Schedule Book. Canberra: DoH, 2014.

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