

21 April 2015

Ms Rosemund Ross
Director, Radiation Oncology and Optometry Section
Medical Specialist Services Branch
Medical Benefits Division

Via email: Rosemund.Ross@health.gov.au

Dear Rosemund

Request for Advice: Proposed New Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) Service for GP Referred Comprehensive Eye Examination by an Optometrist

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) thanks the Department of Health for the invitation to provide advice on the proposal from Optometry Australia. We offer the following comments for your consideration.

Under what clinical circumstances would a GP refer a patient to an optometrist?

The RACGP recognise the role of optometrists in providing accessible eye care for Australians. At present, a GP referral is not required for a patient to undertake an eye examination by an optometrist. Within this context, the College agree that GPs are informally referring patients for visual checks, optical aids and some screening.

Are there specific disorders and/or diseases that would make a GP referral to an optometrist more likely such as AMD, glaucoma, diabetic retinopathy?

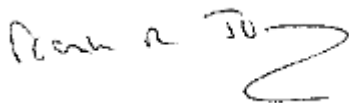
We acknowledge the role of optometrists in the screening of diabetes patients for eye disease. However an MBS-supported GP referral to an optometrist for all other blinding conditions (such as AMD and glaucoma) is not warranted.

Do GPs currently provide written referrals to optometrists and/or do they receive written reports on assessment/management of the eye disorder/diseases?

Within the current informal arrangements, many GPs are not receiving written reports back from optometrists. If a new MBS rebate for GP referral to an optometrists was introduced, written reports back to the GP should be mandatory. This is essential to ensure continuity of care and strengthen the role of GPs as the central coordinators of care.

The RACGP again thank you for the opportunity to provide advice. If you have any further questions regarding this response, please contact Ms Joanna Ong, Program Manager – Quality Care at joanna.ong@racgp.org.au

Yours sincerely



Dr Frank R Jones
President