

Dear Colleagues:

In 2020, Doctors of BC (DoBC) reconstituted a Consultation Working Group to address concerns regarding the re-referral process. This group created an agreed-upon FAQ document which intended to provide clarity on MSP referral and billing rules, but it also caused some confusion due to its length and use of language around a “medically necessary referral”.

Additionally, over the past year, a number of members reached out to the Division to express concerns about the re-referral process. In particular, FPs are asked to provide a No Charge Referral (03333) after a 6-month period, even if the patient is receiving specialist care for an ongoing condition. Members noted that these requests add to the paperwork burden and take away from patient time, and suggested that physician colleagues work together to reduce No Charge Referrals and encourage each other to follow the Referral Process FAQ from Doctors of BC.

The Division Board brought the issue to the Continuity of Care Committee (CCC), whose mandate is to improve the patient journey through the healthcare system by strengthening relationships with specialists and allied health. In July 2022, the CCC met with representatives from DoBC’s Consultation Working Group and Tariff Committee. Here are the learnings from that discussion:

- The current situation mainly stems from the language of the MSP General Preamble and Payment Schedule. As billing rules and wording fall under the purview of the Medical Services Commission, DoBC is limited to the wording of MSP and cannot go beyond what is outlined in the General Preamble. The official wording offers no clear definition of “medically necessary” and by extension, the FAQ is limited to using this same wording.
- If a consulting physician deems it medically necessary for a re-referral, it is within their right to ask for one. Essentially, family physicians are limited in their choices if a re-referral is requested.
- The DoBC Consultation Working Group is aware of the issue and continues to discuss the referral language and processes.
- The newly ratified Physician Master Agreement (PMA) includes an objective to address the re-referrals issue (along with other administrative burdens). The re-referrals process is currently undergoing a third-party assisted review, with a target resolution date of April 30, 2023.

While the issues currently remain unresolved, we are hopeful that the new PMA provisions will result in productive changes as we continue to work together for stronger primary care.

With gratitude for all you do,
The Continuity of Care Committee