



## Managing the physical health needs of *people with severe mental illness*

This fact sheet sets out some options for utilising MBS items to improve the physical health care of people with severe mental illness.

### Key messages:

- Consider using the chronic disease management (CDM) items where a person with a severe mental illness has a chronic physical condition
- CDM items allow access to allied health and dental Medicare-subsided services
- CDM items can be used *in tandem with* mental health items, where a patient has an established chronic physical health problem as well as a mental illness
- Generic consultation items can also be used, in tandem with mental health items, to address physical health needs

Chronic Disease Management (CDM) MBS Items	
The Chronic Disease Management (CDM) Medicare items are for GPs to manage the health care of patients with chronic or terminal medical conditions, including mental illness and/or patients whose complexity of needs requires multidisciplinary, team-based care from a GP and at least two other health or care providers.	
Item No.	Item Description
#721	Preparation of GP Management Plan (GPMP)
#723	Co-ordination of Team Care Arrangements (GP Management Plan not mandatory)
#732	Review of GP Management Plan or Co-ordination of review of Team Care Arrangements
#729	Contribution to a Multidisciplinary Care Plan, or to a review of a multidisciplinary care plan, for a patient who is not a care recipient in a residential aged care facility
#731	Contribution to a multidisciplinary care plan, or to a review of a multidisciplinary care plan, for a resident in an aged care facility

**Patients with severe mental illness – with or without co morbid chronic physical conditions - are eligible for CDM items, and the Medicare rebateable allied health and dental items that can be accessed as a result**

**Allied Health items** - patient with both a GP Management Plan (#721) *and* a Team Care Arrangement (#723) can access five Medicare rebateable sessions with an allied health provider (items 10950 to 10970). Allied health services include: diabetes education, exercise physiology, dietetics, physiotherapy, and podiatry, psychology and other mental health services.<sup>1</sup>

**Dental health items** – Poor dental health is a particular problem for many people with severe mental illness. The dental services items (85011 to 87777) allow a patient with a GP Management Plan and TCA to get a Medicare rebate for up to \$4,000 of dental work over 2 years. While in some areas it can be difficult to find a

<sup>1</sup> Patients need to be referred by their GP for the allied health services recommended in their care plan, using the referral form issued by DoHA that can be found at: <http://www.health.gov.au/mbsprimarycareitems> or a form that contains all the components of the Department's form.

dentist to do this work, some GP clinics have phoned round local dentists and now have a list of those willing to provide services under these items.

NB where a patient has a chronic and severe mental illness, but does not have an established chronic physical disease, clinical judgement should be exercised in deciding whether to use CDM items only, or in combination with the **mental health items**.

Mental Health Items	
The mental health items provide a structured framework for GPs to undertake early intervention, assessment and management of patients with mental disorders, as well as providing referral pathways to clinical psychologist and allied mental health service providers.	
Item No.	Item Description
#2710	Preparation of Mental Health Treatment Plan (GP with MH Skills Training)
#2702	Preparation of Mental Health Treatment Plan (GP without MH Skills Training)
#2712	Review of GP Mental Health Treatment Plan
#2713	Mental Health Consultation

**Mental health items may be useful in developing a planned approach to the management and treatment of people with severe mental illness, and to refer them for focussed psychological strategies under Better Access or ATAPS, for example for the management of anxiety.** NB It would not be appropriate for a patient to have a GP Mental Health Treatment Plan and referral to Better Access or ATAPS *and* receive psychology or other mental health services through the CDM allied health items.

Where a patient is treated under mental health items and has pressing physical health needs, it may be appropriate to claim a mental health item and a separate generic consultation item to deal with their physical health problems *on the same day*. Medicare advises that this should be the exception rather than the rule, and should be done only where clinically indicated.

MBS explanatory note A43 says:

‘if a GP Mental Health Treatment item is undertaken or initiated during the course of a consultation for another purpose, the GP Mental Health Treatment Plan, Review or Consultation item and the relevant item for the other consultation may both be claimed’

However, note that:

‘if a consultation is for the purpose of a GP Mental Health Treatment Plan, Review or Consultation item, a separate and additional consultation should not be undertaken in conjunction with the mental health consultation, unless it is **clinically indicated that a separate problem must be treated immediately** [our emphasis].’

The matter of *urgency* is for the GP to determine. If, for example, a patient with poorly managed schizophrenia has come for a review of their mental health treatment plan and has physical health issues, it would seem reasonable to treat both at the same visit, rather than ask the patient to return to treat their physical health needs when there is a high probability that the patient’s mental health condition may jeopardise their likely attendance at a second appointment.

Medicare advise that where separate consultations are undertaken in conjunction with mental health consultations, the patient’s invoice or Medicare voucher (assignment of benefit form) for the separate consultation should be annotated, e.g. **‘separate consultation clinically required/indicated’**.