

Virtual Ward guide for General Practitioners

The Metro North Virtual Ward (VW) is an additional telehealth service that complements the current Virtual Emergency Department, COVID Virtual Ward, and Hospital-in-the-home services available within the MNHHS (Metro North Hospital and Health Service) region. Given the success of the virtual care model, the Metro North VW can now admit and manage patients with conditions other than COVID.

The VW can assist GPs by providing an inpatient equivalent admission for eligible patients.

On admission patients will be provided with team-based care via regular phone calls and/or video consults. The ward is based at RBWH (Royal Brisbane and Women's Hospital) and staffed from 0700-1930 7 days a week with overnight access to medical support. The patients will have access to medical, nursing, pharmacy, and selective allied health services including social work support.

What can Virtual Ward provide your patients?

- Clinician review determined by patient's primary illness and co-morbidities.
- Monitoring equipment free of charge if required
- Admission relevant medications delivered free of charge to their home
- Facilitation of relevant investigations e.g.- blood tests, Imaging including MRI, EEG, ECG. Echocardiogram
- Facilitation of Specialist opinion
- Pharmacy and medication review
- Referral to selective Allied Health services

Which patients are eligible for admission to the VW?

Patients who require a brief period of monitoring, investigation and treatment which would otherwise require them to stay in hospital.

Patients at risk of deterioration, which if detected early, can be managed at home, and avoid an inpatient admission.

Patients where timely investigation and specialist opinion would assist diagnosis and stabilisation.

Patients where daily review in between planned GP review would be helpful.

What are some examples of conditions that may be suitable for VW admission?

Respiratory and infectious disease

- Respiratory illness including COVID, influenza, community acquired pneumonia, infective exacerbations of asthma and other chronic obstructive airway conditions
- Infections including cellulitis, osteomyelitis, UTI

Cardiac

- Severe hypertension without neurological red flags for short term monitoring and medication adjustment
- Heart failure without cardiac red flags for investigation and monitoring of fluid balance/diuretic titration

Endocrinology

- Hyperglycaemia without severe ketoacidosis for short term monitoring and medication adjustment.
- Electrolyte abnormalities requiring investigation and monitoring

Haematology/Oncology

- Serendipitous lumps to expedite investigation, diagnosis and specialist review

Neurology

- Subacute neurological presentations without neurological red flags to expedite investigations and diagnosis e.g. syncope, TIA, neuro-cognitive changes

Which patients are excluded from admission to the VW?

- Patients aged < 16 years
- Residents of Residential Aged Care Facilities (except independent living)
- Patient who are unable to interact with the VW due to technological barriers, severe cognitive/communication deficits

How to refer your patients to VW?

Phone **07 3074 2109** during business hours (0800-1700) or phone RBWH switchboard (all hours) on **07 3646 8111** and ask to speak to the Virtual Ward Consultant.

If your patient is accepted, please complete the VW referral form (available as Best Practice template or PDF referral) and email MN-VirtualWardAdmin@health.qld.gov.au.

If your practice would like a copy of the referral forms to have on file, please contact the above numbers.

How to monitor your patients progress?

You can review your patient's daily progress via the Health Provider Portal/ Viewer.

A discharge summary will be sent at the end of the admission.

If you would like to contribute further information at any stage about your patient, please phone the Virtual Ward Consultant on **07 3074 2109**.

Medicare Note

As the patients are considered inpatients then the usual restrictions on access to Medicare rebates apply. It is not expected that you will be required to provide clinical services whilst they remain an inpatient.

How can I find out more information about the VW?

Please contact the ward by either phone **07 3074 2109** during business hours (0800-1600 M-F) or email MN-VirtualWardAdmin@health.qld.gov.au. Practice managers are welcome to contact the VW to request a copy the referral forms/templates for use in the practice.