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**AMA secures telehealth for COVID patients**

The Australian Medical Association welcomes the federal government's decision to extend telehealth access for patients with COVID, following talks with AMA last week.

When states and territories dropped public health orders last week requiring covid positive patients to self-isolate, many patients with COVID would have been unable to access MBS-funded telehealth services from a GP unless they had attended a face-to-face visit in the last 12 months.

While the AMA fully supports the provision of telehealth through a patient's usual GP or practice, it is important that rules do not prevent patients from accessing care when they have COVID and need to stay at home.

AMA Vice President Dr Danielle McMullen said the decision by the government to exempt COVID-19 positive patients from Medicare’s ‘established relationship rule’ was a sensible one that will support patients who are self-isolating and ensure they do not need to visit a general practice.

“This helps limit the spread of COVID in the community and ensures vulnerable patients are not exposed to the virus,” Dr McMullen said.

“It’s a ‘no-brainer’ that COVID positive patients need access to their GP via telehealth.

“We’re pleased the Department of Health understood the position COVID positive patients were put in once mandated isolation times were dropped and responded rapidly to the AMA’s advocacy on behalf of our members and patients.

“This will help minimise the number of Covid positive patients in the waiting room and reduce the spread of COVID-19.”

While this exemption is due to end on 31 December, the AMA will continue to work with the government to ensure it is in place for as long as it is needed as part of pandemic response arrangements.

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