

June 2022

Virtual ED News!

Our Virtual ED has now consulted over 18,000 patients since it opened in October 2020. It is accessible 24/7 with medical reviews available between the hours of 8am-11.30pm 7 days a week. Following feedback local GP's can now refer a patient by emailing ed.virturaltriage@nh.org.au. Please include the following criteria:

- Patients Full name and address, DOB, Mobile Number (for video call) and email address
- Referral letter and urgency of care
- Referring Doctors name, email address and Medical Centre details

It is vital you ensure your patients have access to a phone or device capable of receiving a video call from the service, and you have gained consent for the hospital to contact them.

For more information [click here](#)



GP Access telephone number Ph: 8405 8815

The GP Access line provides GP's with a single contact point for enquiries. When calling the GP Access line, you will be presented with the following options:

1. **For Specialist Clinics Enquiries** –links you to staff who can assist with referral information, patient appointments and all general enquiries
2. **For Community Services** –covers enquiries and referrals related to the Allied Health, Hospital Admission Risk Program (HARP) and Health Independence Programs
3. **For the ED Clinical Hotline** –forwards your call directly to the ED triage physician
4. **For urgent enquiries for Specialist Clinics** – links you with staff that can assist with urgent referrals
5. **For Primary Care Liaison** –links you to staff who can assist with GP education information and the Primary Care Liaison Office

Northern Health Outpatients Specialist Clinics

Northern Health Specialist Outpatient Clinics incorporates a number of ambulatory services for patients who require specialist opinion and management including: General and Subspecialty Medicine, Surgery, Maternal and Women's Health and Paediatrics.

Demand for Outpatient Specialist Appointments

There have been approximately 175,000 attendances to Outpatient Clinics year to date, including 42,000 new referrals (internal and external referrals).

Unfortunately, request for Specialist opinion and management exceeds demand, with almost 33,500 patients on the waitlist for an appointment. Of these, 23,500 (75%) have been on the waitlist for greater than 12 months. If the condition of your patient has deteriorated, please provide an updated referral for re-assessment and possible re-prioritisation.

Notification of Appointments to Patients

Patient notification of an upcoming appointment now consists of a text message and a posted letter. Patients receive multiple reminder text's including when the appointment is booked (usually 4-6 weeks prior to their appointment), 7 days prior and 2 days prior.

Planned appointment allocation system

A new appointment allocation system was implemented late last year to address Outpatient Clinic overbooking and subsequent cancellations.

Patients needing an appointment in 6 weeks or less are allocated an Outpatient clinic appointment. Those assessed as needing an appointment in greater than 6 weeks are registered for an appointment. They are provided an appointment within the recommended time frame or the next available. Our allocation system takes into account multiple factors such as how long beyond the recommended time the patient has been waiting and the recommended time-frame an appointment should be given to prioritise those at risk of deterioration.

Patients are mailed a letter to acknowledge the need for an Outpatient clinic appointment. If you feel a more urgent assessment is required please generate a new referral for re-assessment and possible re-prioritisation.

Preferred Method of Outpatient Specialist Clinic Referral

Northern Health Specialist Clinics have switched to HealthLink SmartForms for receiving referrals from GPs. HealthLink is a secure, safe electronic channel for delivery of identifiable clinical information between healthcare providers. Information on how to refer using your specific clinical software can be found [here](#)

COVID Early Therapy Program

Early Therapy for high risk COVID patients in the community is a rapidly changing field, due to changes in guidelines and changes in availability of medications. Supply of Sotrovimab therapy is almost exhausted, patients will be offered Paxlovid oral therapy as first line.

Northern Health has a proactive program to identify and treat high risk individuals in line with national and state guidelines. Thanks to COVID Positive Pathways, the GP community and the HSPs for support of this program.

To refer a patient for consideration of early COVID treatments, guidelines are as per the HealthPathways website: <https://melbourne.healthpathways.org.au/> Follow the links to COVID-19 then COVID-19 Treatment Requests and then look at "Eastern Melbourne" or "North Western Melbourne" PHN, depending on where the patient lives. Northern Health details are listed under Eastern Melbourne. We require full referral details emailed to: sotrovimab@nh.org.au this email is monitored 7 days a week during business hours, however we cannot provide emergency care or advice via this inbox.

Please take care to manage patient expectations. Any referral to our service is for consideration for early COVID therapy. Given tight eligibility criteria, time windows and resources, your patient may not be eligible and/or high priority.

GP's can prescribe Inhaled budesonide therapy for medium and high-risk patients.

Empowering patients with IBD

The Northern Health Inflammatory Bowel Disease (IBD) Service has proudly led a national effort to develop and disseminate dedicated patient information materials for people with IBD.

With endorsement by the Gastroenterological Society of Australia (GESA) and its IBD Executive, these comprehensive and easy to understand patient information sheets covering a variety of topics including diet, travel, vaccinations, sexual health, mental health, surgery, and life with a stoma, as well as all the currently available pharmaceutical agents for use for patients with IBD, were formulated. These were launched at the Australian Gastroenterology Week (AGW) 2021, and have been [uploaded on the GESA website for open access to all patients and health care practitioners here.](#)

A/Prof Mayur said this "represents another way by which Northern Health's staff continue to contribute, not just to our community, but Australian society as a whole. We hope these resources will facilitate greater clinician-patient engagement, as well as empower patients through complex decision-making processes during their chronic disease journey."



Meet the team!

Name - Kirra McGaw

Time at NH - 2 months

What is your role at NH? - I am the Primary Care Liaison Officer.

I am the interface for GP's to contact Northern Health. I work closely with our Specialist clinics and other NH departments to help support Primary Care providers and address communication gaps, provide education, support community care and support a Shared Maternity Care model.

What's your background? - I have worked in General Practice for 16 years as both an Enrolled Nurse and Practice Manager.

What do you enjoy about the work you do? - Whilst I am new to the role, I am well aware of the communication gap that exists between GP's and the hospital. I am excited about being in a position where I can make a difference and help bridge that gap whilst understanding the challenges that are faced in General Practice.

What do you enjoy doing when you are not at work? - I love spending time with my two young children. Being a mum is, and will always be my greatest accomplishment and passion.

What is the best place you have travelled to? - I love exploring Asian countries. My favourite places so far have been: Ha Long Bay in Vietnam, the elephant orphanage in Sri Lanka and seeing the Great Wall of China.

Where do you see yourself in 10 years? - I hope to be an integral part of Northern Health's Primary Care Liaison Unit and have achieved the goals of the unit along with my colleagues. I dream to have been able to take my kids to most of the Disneyland's in the world by this time.



Contact us

GP Liaison Unit

P: (03) 8405 8815 (option 5)

E: nh-primarycareliaison@nh.org.au

W: <https://www.nh.org.au/health-professionals/primary-care-liaison/>

Accessing Discharge Summaries via My Health Record

Northern Health uploads patient discharge summaries and pathology results to the patient's My Health Record. This means you can access this information instantly while you are in your patient's clinical file. For more information on how to do this using your clinical software [click here](#)