

26<sup>th</sup> March 2020

Dear Colleagues,

## **NORTHERN HEALTH SPECIALIST CLINIC COVID-19 CHANGES**

As you are all well aware, we are in the midst of the COVID-19 pandemic and Northern Health is actively preparing to provide the best care for the patients in our community. Our specialist clinics team have been actively preparing to reduce infection risk for our patients as well as assist our clinicians in providing the best care during this challenging period.

Given the anticipated impact on the public health system from COVID-19, Northern Health Specialist clinics have made a few key temporary changes to our care model:

- Only urgent new appointments will be made; non-urgent appointments will be suspended until further notice
- Telephone and telehealth clinics have been established to continue specialist consulting in a normally high onsite traffic environment.
- Face to face clinics will be significantly restricted
- New referrals and existing appointments will be triaged to life-threatening and/or likely to cause significant morbidity and mortality during the next few months.
- Routine and CAT 3 appointments will be placed on a waitlist until the pandemic has resolved. If you feel that your patient's condition deteriorates, please send a modified referral specifying this urgency or contact the appropriate specialist team at Northern Health.
- It is preferable for GPs to use Health Direct for referrals.

We understand that these changes will have an impact on your practice and patients in your care. Specialist advice for patients not requiring urgent treatment will continue to be available by contacting the relevant specialty registrar through Northern Health switchboard (Tel: 8405 8000).

Thank you for your understanding during these challenging times.

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