

# Statewide Persistent Pain Management Clinical Network COVID-19 Response Guidelines - December 2021

Use of this guideline and other policy documents will be underpinned by local factors. These include location and demographics, as well as service factors, such as leadership, governance, resources, policies and procedures.

## Current Services

### 1. Category 1 Patients

All Statewide Persistent Pain Management services (PPMS) will continue to treat category 1 patients in normal operational mode.

### 2. New Category 2 Patients

All Statewide PPMS' should aim to treat all new category 2 patients in normal operational mode.

### 3. Follow up Category 2 Patients

- All Statewide PPMS should aim to treat follow up category 2 patients in normal operational mode, with increased utilisation of telehealth. In particular, for rural and regional patient under the current Chief Health Officer public health directions.
- Existing category 3 patients already on wait list continue to be treated in normal operational mode (with increased use of telehealth particularly for follow up appointments and when patients are required to travel by air / >50km or outside of an area locked down under Chief Health Officer public health directions)
- Follow up category 3 patients should be seen by telehealth wherever possible.
- New referrals triaged as category 3 referrals where possible treatment commenced in conjunction with the referring General Practitioner (GP)/medical team.
- Essential treatment of existing patients e.g. pump refills is a category 1 procedure and treated in normal operational mode.
- Workforce considerations - refer to the Australian Government Department of Health [Work permissions and restrictions framework for workers in health care settings](#).

## Innovations

- Increased utilisation of telehealth for appointments.
- Increased uptake and utilisation of GP case conferencing that has been offered by all services at this time. This is likely to continue it has been well received with increased GP and patient satisfaction.
- Virtual group pain programs being designed in some form are being rolled out by certain PPMS.
- GP phone advice services line regarding Pain Management are currently being offered in some form by all PPMS to GPs within their PPMS referral catchment area.

## Concerns

- Statewide PPMS are referred a significantly large proportion of category 3 and category 2 patients. Health service lines are concerned that a blanket ban on seeing category 3 patients will create long term harm through worsening mental health, worsening physical health, isolation and increasing opioid use, particularly in vulnerable groups and those at risk of waiting 12- 18 months for specialist care.

Response: A more nuanced approach to ensure treatment continues for some category 3 and category 2 patients represents a compassionate and effective stewardship response to COVID-19 health service priorities.

- Loss of administration staff to other roles/ services as PPMS are implementing telehealth and safe face to face consults.

Response: Initiate telehealth expansion prior to further COVID restrictions. Cyber security for telehealth consultants and group programs, need best platform and approval to use.

## Version control

Version	Date	Author	Changes	Date approved by CSRG	Proposed Review Date
1.0	9/11/2021	Statewide Persistent Pain Management Clinical Network			13 May 2022
1.1	14/12/2021	Changes made by Statewide Persistent Pain Management Clinical Network	Feedback from COVID System Response Group (CSRG) - content updated under response in page 2. Added purpose and workforce statement. Renamed as guideline.	22/12/2021	13 May 2022