

mcp newsletter

August 28, 2020

20-10

TO: ALL FEE-FOR-SERVICE FAMILY PHYSICIANS

RE: REVISED PANDEMIC VIRTUAL CARE ASSESSMENT

In consultation with the Newfoundland and Labrador Medical Association, the Department of Health and Community Services is introducing changes and clarifications to the Pandemic Virtual Care Assessment (PVCA) fee code (fee code 50000) as highlighted in green below.

The Pandemic Virtual Care Assessment fee code is a temporary fee code for virtual care provided by family physicians during the coronavirus pandemic. **This fee code is in effect until October 1, 2020.** Use of the PVCA code is not restricted to diagnoses specific to COVID-19. **The PVCA fee code is only available to family physicians. Consultants wishing to bill for virtual care services during the pandemic should review MCP newsletter 20-09 posted August 12, 2020.**

A PVCA can be billed for services delivered by telephone or video conferencing. These services provide an alternative to an in-person visit when such alternatives are appropriate. As such, an in-person service may not be claimed within 24 hours following a claimed virtual care visit. However, when an in-person service is deemed medically necessary by the physician within 24 hours of a virtual care assessment, the physician should submit a claim to MCP for independent consideration with appropriate substantiating information as per section 4.3.1 of the Medical Payment Schedule.

Although it is recommended that physicians wishing to provide patient video conferencing use an application approved by the Newfoundland and Labrador Centre for Health Information (NLCHI), physicians using other video conferencing applications can also bill a PVCA. **Currently approved solutions include Cisco Jabber and Zoom for Healthcare. Telus Med Access users have two options for patient video conferencing that are integrated and supported by Telus: Virtual Visit and Health Myself. Please visit <https://virtualcarenl.ca> for more information. Visit <https://virtualcarenl.ca/health-care-providers/support-and-faq/> for service, information, and technical support provided by NLCHI and Telus. Med Access users should contact Telus directly for technical support with virtual care.**

A PVCA may only be claimed when the service is provided directly to the patient and cannot be claimed for communications between health care providers. Both provider and patient may meet virtually in a physical location of their choosing as long as both the provider and patient are located within Newfoundland and Labrador. In-person visits are required when physical examination is necessary and cannot be adequately conducted using virtual means. Assessments requiring an in-person physical examination are not eligible for billing a PVCA.

Family physicians who are approved for use of Telemedicine fee codes 501-504, 511-513, 531-532, and 539 of the MCP Medical Payment Schedule and adhere to the Telemedicine Preamble of the Payment Schedule may continue to use those fee codes should they choose to do so. The PVCA fee code does not replace the Family Medicine section located in the Telemedicine section of the MCP Payment Schedule, although it offers family physicians greater flexibility in physical location and technology during the pandemic.

Patients cannot be charged for any aspect of a publicly funded PVCA.

50000 Pandemic Virtual Care Assessment
(telephone or patient video conferencing) 42.00

PVCA Record Requirements:

- 1) Documentation must meet the minimum requirements for a visit as stated in the MCP Medical Payment Schedule preamble section 4.2.2 with the exception of physical examination documentation.
- 2) The record of service must include the patient's telephone number if contact is made by phone.
- 3) The record of service must contain the start and end time of the patient encounter.
- 4) Patient consent for a PVCA is not required for MCP payment. However, physicians should familiarize themselves with direction provided by the Canadian Medical Protective Association (<https://www.cmpa-acpm.ca/en/covid19> and <https://www.cmpa-acpm.ca/en/advice-publications/browse-articles/2018/thinking-of-working-with-virtual-clinics---consider-these-medical-legal-issues>) and the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Newfoundland and Labrador (<https://www.cpsnl.ca/web/files/2017-Mar-11%20-%20Telemedicine.pdf>).

PVCA Claim Submission Requirements:

- 1) Effective September 1, 2020, when submitting a claim for a PVCA, a remarks code is required. Please enter remarks code 48 when using a telephone for the patient encounter. Please enter remarks code 49 when a video conferencing application is used.
- 2) There is a daily billing limit of 40 units of fee code 50000 per physician per day. Physicians submitting greater than 40 units of PVCA services will have the billings recovered.
- 3) There is a maximum of one PVCA billed per patient per day. If more than one virtual assessment is medically necessary, physicians should submit records for independent consideration as per section 4.3.1 of the Medical Payment Schedule.
- 4) A PVCA cannot be billed with any other service codes. No add-ons or premiums are billable with this code. There can be no overlapping services for this fee code or any other service billed by the physician.
- 5) This code is not payable for prescription renewals, notification of normal test results, notification of office, referral or other appointments, or other administrative tasks.
- 6) Retroactive to July 7, 2020, family physicians may bill a PVCA for services provided by undergraduate and postgraduate medical learners provided that the Preamble criteria in Section 5.6 of the MCP Medical Payment Schedule are met. In consultation with the NLMA, the Department of Health and Community Services is considering changes to the Preamble supporting the remote supervision of learners.
- 7) Physicians billing fee code 611010 for Category 'B' services may also bill the Pandemic Virtual Care Assessment code **if the physician is on-site** at the Category 'B' service site. Physicians billing codes 611010 and 50000 should indicate on the individual medical records for fee code 50000 that they are present on-site at the Category 'B' emergency department or pandemic assessment clinic.

Questions relating to the content of this Newsletter should be directed Dr. Colleen Crowther, Assistant Medical Director at (709) 758-1557 or by email at colleencrowther@gov.nl.ca.