

## Physician FAQs

Last Updated: 01330 hrs March 31, 2020

*The following FAQs have been developed by Medical Affairs to help inform physicians as we respond to the COVID-19 pandemic.*

*These FAQs will be updated over time. New versions will be sent to all physicians as more questions are identified or additional information is available.*

**Questions/ answers have been highlighted in yellow have been modified or added since the last version.**

- 1. I am a salaried or contract for services physician, and am concerned that I will not make my Blended Payment due to patient volumes this week, and in the coming weeks. What is Health PEI's plan in regards to this?**

At this time, physicians should continue to shadow bill as they normally do.

Health PEI will be looking at what modifications to the blended payment thresholds for January to March 2020 will be needed, given these unprecedented times in responding to this pandemic.

- 2. Can I bill for patients I see virtually?**

Effective March 16, 2020, physicians will be eligible to bill for following fee codes for services delivered via **virtual care (telephone, secure videoconferencing, and secure email/text)** during the COVID-19 pandemic:

- Limited Office Visit – fee code xx13 (including at a walk in clinic)
- Health Promotion Counseling – fee code 2505
- Psychotherapy – fee code 2501 **or 2504**
- Diagnostic and Therapeutic Interview – fee code 2588, 2586, **2886**
- **Consultation – fee code xx60**
- **Repeat consultation – fee code xx62**
- **Geriatric follow up visit – fee code 2863**

Billing Instructions:

- Service must be direct patient care by a physician to a patient, in lieu of a face-to-face visit.
- Service can be initiated by either the physician or the patient.
- **These services are only billable for medically necessary services that can be safely and competently delivered via virtual care.**

- Physical examination not required when completed by virtual care for fee code xx13.
- For time based codes (2501, **2504**, 2505, 2586, 2588, **2886**) please make sure the time of day is on the claim. Also these codes are a minimum of 15 minutes.
- Patient chart must document that it was a telemedicine (telephone, secure email/text, secure videoconferencing) in lieu of physical visit for COVID-19.
- Physicians must continue to document in patient chart as per Tariff of Fees Preamble requirements.
- For patients in self-isolation, the billing claim must include “COVID-19 self-isolation”.
- For all other patient care delivered via telephone, the billing claim must include a comment “COVID-19 telemedicine”

Please note that this is a temporary measure and will be reviewed again in mid April.

**3. Do the codes indicated above in Question #2 for telephone apply to videoconferencing, secure email/text as well?**

Yes, the codes listed above in Question #2 will apply for secure videoconferencing. The codes will also apply to email correspondence with patients through secure email platforms only such as Groupwise.

Please be advised that Gmail, Yahoo mail, etc is not considered secure email, and that FaceTime is not considered secure videoconferencing at this time.

**4. Can I bill for a Telephone Prescription Renewal in addition to the visit codes listed in Question #2?**

No, physicians cannot bill for a telephone prescription renewal on the same day that they bill virtually for a Limited Office Visit – fee code xx13; Health Promotion Counseling – fee code 2505; Psychotherapy – fee code 2501 or **2504**; or Diagnostic and Therapeutic Interview – fee code 2588, 2586, **2886**.

However, Health PEI will temporarily suspend the restriction to bill telephone prescription renewal on Day 2 and Day 3 after a visit code is billed.

**5. Can the telephone consultations include email correspondence? I have patients emailing me from Florida/international locations with questions on their health, how to safely travel home, notes to be emailed for airports in terms of chronic respiratory/cough conditions?**

**This question has been reviewed by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of PEI. The standard of care is such that physicians are considered to be practicing medicine in the location of where the patient is calling from. So, a physician can be in Florida and if a patient calls and is in PEI, the physician can give advice. However, if the physician is in PEI and patient in Florida, and the physician gives**

**advice, they are considered to be practicing in Florida. Unless the physician has a Florida license, they would be considered to be practicing illegally.**

**Further, CMPA is clear that they would not cover any physician practicing outside of Canada and so did not recommend physicians give advice to patients not in PEI, and especially not in country.**

**The only exception to this would be a physician calling a patient to follow up on a problem they saw a patient about while the patient was in PEI.**

**6. I am planning to work a walk in clinic. Can I call patients on the telephone if they cannot walk in because of COVID-19? If so, what would I bill?**

Yes, telephone calls will be permitted to patients who cannot attend a walk in clinic in person due to COVID-19. As a temporary measure, the physician should bill fee code 0113 Limited Office visit, and a comment must be added to the billing claim. For patients in self-isolation, include "COVID-19 self-isolation" and for all other patient care delivered via telephone include "COVID-19 telemedicine".

**7. How do I account for my time that I spend in COVID-19 planning?**

For those physicians who are participating in COVID-19 planning meetings organized by Health PEI as part of our pandemic planning, you are eligible to bill fee code 0050 Administrative Meetings for time spent in these meetings. In the billing claim, please include in the comment "COVID-19 meeting".

**8. Can I claim for more staff meetings than the max 2 per month that is currently permitted as per Preamble 32 for Administrative Meetings?**

Given the unique situation that we find ourselves in with COVID-19, and as part of our temporary billing measures, we will temporarily allow billings for one staff meeting per week. This will also be reviewed again in mid April.

**9. I am a fee for service physician, and moving to essential services has a major effect on both my clinic, OR time and ambulatory care time. What is being done to help me?**

Health PEI recognizes that fee for service physicians are independent and are impacted when essential services are in place and/or when patients cancel appointments since they cannot bill for services that were not rendered.

**To that end, Health PEI worked with Government officials to provide financial support to those significantly impacted by the move to essential services. Information on this base financial support was provided to fee for service physicians on March 26, 2020.**

10. I am a locum physician here, and there is a major effect on what I thought I was going to be paid for my services. What is being done to help me?

**Fee for service locum physicians should refer to the Health PEI Base Financial Support information fact sheet provided to those locum physicians on March 26, 2020.**

11. I have just come back from out of country and am required to self-isolate. Will I be paid for my two weeks in isolation?

***Salaried Physicians:***

If you are a salaried physician, who is asymptomatic (not experiencing symptoms) be required to self-isolate, you will be placed on paid administrative leave. If you have the option/ability to do some virtual care from home, please discuss this with your Medical Director.

Should a salaried physician develop any symptoms of COVID-19, such as fatigue, aches, fever, cough and difficulty breathing, you should call 811 for screening to determine whether a test is appropriate.

Once symptomatic, paid administrative leave ends and standard sick leave begins as outlined in the respective collective agreement.

If a salaried physician tests positive for COVID-19, you will be required to continue to self-isolate and follow medical advice. This may extend past the 14 day self-isolation period.

***Contract for Services Physicians:***

If you are a contract for services physician, and you were scheduled to work during your timeframe in isolation, please continue to submit your regularly scheduled hours on your timesheet, include the comment "Physician Self Isolation" and submit to Medicare. If you are able to work virtually from home, you are encouraged to do so.

***Sessional Physicians:***

If you are a sessional physician, and you were scheduled to work during your timeframe in isolation, please continue to bill your sessional rates for the hours/days that you were scheduled to work, and include the comment "Physician Self Isolation" on your billing claim.

***Fee-For-Service Physicians:***

**If you are a fee-for-service physician, please refer to the Health PEI Base Financial Support information provided on March 26, 2020.**

**Please note:**

Physicians who choose to travel outside of Canada following the March 13, 2020, travel restriction recommendations and the 14 day required self-isolation notification are not eligible for paid leave during the 14 day self-isolation period.

*It is important to notify your Medical Director as to changes in your status regardless of your payment modality.*

**12. Will the new Master Agreement be implemented if ratified for April 1, 2020?**

The date the new Master Agreement will be implemented will be determined through discussions with the Medical Society of PEI. The effective date of any new fee codes or changes will be honored if implementation does not occur until after their effective date.

**13. I am a physician and many of my clinical services have been cancelled; I have capacity to assist where I am needed. Who do I contact to discuss where I can be of value?**

Thank you for your co-operation in being re-deployed where you are needed most. At this time, please contact your medical director/program medical director/department head to discuss this option.

Here is a listing of current medical directors/program medical directors/department heads:

<b>Acute Care Medical Directors</b>	
QEH	Dr. Hussam Azzam
PCH	Dr. Wassim Salamoun
<b>Network Medical Directors</b>	
West	Dr. Wassim Salamoun
Queen	Dr. Ed White
Kings	Dr. Laura Neumann
<b>Program Medical Directors</b>	
Chief Medical Information Officer	Dr. Spencer Brown
Diabetes	Dr. Lenley Adams
Diagnostic Imaging	Dr. Melanie McQuaid
Geriatrics	Dr. Martha Carmichael
Laboratory Services	Dr. Marvin Tesh (acting for Dr. Kristen Mead)

# Health PEI

One Island Health System

Medical Affairs

16 Garfield St, Charlottetown

Long Term Care	Dr. Jan Rogerson
Medical Education	Dr. Shannon Curtis
Palliative Care	Dr. Mireille Lecours (Dr. Janet Baker acting until March 23)
Physical Medicine	Dr. Edmund Harrison
<b>Psychiatry</b>	<b>Dr. Heather Keizer</b>
<b>Department Heads- Queen Elizabeth Hospital</b>	
Anaesthesia	Dr. Jean-Yves Dubois
Cardio-Respiratory	Dr. Ayodeji Harris-Eze
Emergency Medicine	Dr. Ron Whalen Dr. Aaron Sibley (acting for Dr. Whalen)
Family Medicine	Dr. Laura O'Connor (acting for Dr. Andrew Wohlgenut)
Hospitalist	Dr. Jill Cunniffe Dr. Lori Cheverie (acting for Dr. Cunniffe)
ICU/CCU	Dr. Patrick McCrea
Internal Medicine	Dr. Lenley Adams
Oncology	Dr. Philip Champion
OBGYN	Dr. Shaun Ferguson
Pediatrics	Dr. Peggy Bethune
Surgery	Dr. Kristian MacDonald
<b>Department Heads –Prince County Hospital</b>	
Anaesthesia	Dr. Brenda Keeping
Emergency Medicine	<b>Dr. Steve MacNeill (co-head)</b> Dr. Ryan Lieph (co-head)
Family Medicine	Dr. John Morash
Internal Medicine	Dr. Michael Irvine
OBGYN	Dr. Hani Farag
Pediatrics	Dr. April MacPhee
Surgery	Dr. David Bannon

**14. I am a fee for service physician who has been approved to bill for delegated functions under Preamble 5.B of the Master Agreement. Can my staff also use the virtual fee codes and bill under the delegated function?**

Yes, your staff can also use the virtual codes that would be normally allowed under delegated function. The billing instructions laid out in Question #2 still apply in addition to the regular comment for delegated functions. You can still only bill 75% of the fee code for any delegated function.

Virtual fee codes that would be applicable would be: 0113, 2501 and 2505.

**15. If I did not travel internationally but did travel out of province within Canada or into Prince Edward Island, am I required to self-isolate?**

As of March 21, 2020, the Chief Public Health Office has instituted a 14-day self-isolation period for anyone who has travelled outside PEI, including within Canada. Those who return to the Island, including health care workers and physicians, will be screened for symptoms.

However, we can confirm that health care workers, including physicians, are exempt for the 14-day isolation period and do not have to stay home as long as they have not had symptoms of COVID-19 and have not traveled outside of Canada.

This exception is to allow health care workers and physicians to continue to offer essential services to Islanders.

As physicians, you are trusted to monitor your own symptoms to ensure your health and safety and that of your patients. Those who have returned from travel within Canada are asked to self-monitor for COVID-19 symptoms and leave work as soon as they start to feel unwell, including body aches, fatigue, cough, fever, or shortness of breath.

**16. I have been asked to work at the Cough and Fever Assessment Clinic. How will I be paid?**

Physicians working at the Cough and Fever Assessment clinic will be paid an hourly rate of \$165 regardless whether they are a Family Physician or Specialist. This rate is not eligible for blended payment nor any premiums.

There are two Cough and Fever Assessment clinics operating – one in Charlottetown and one in Summerside. The clinic is intended to be staffed by two physicians. The clinic will run 8 hours per day, 7 days per week.

**17. What ICD-9 code should I use for COVID-19 cases?**

Direction from Medicare is that ICD-9 code to use is 487.8.

**18. If I have additional questions, who do I contact?**

*General Questions:*

Gail Scott

Director, Medical Affairs

Email: [gascott@ihis.org](mailto:gascott@ihis.org)

Phone: 902-368-3692

*Billing Questions:*

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*Locum Questions:*

Nadine MacLean

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