



6 April 2020

The Hon Greg Hunt MP  
Minister for Health  
Parliament House  
CANBERRA ACT 2600

**By email: [Greg.Hunt.MP@aph.gov.au](mailto:Greg.Hunt.MP@aph.gov.au)**

Dear Minister Hunt,

I would like to extend my congratulations to you for the Morrison Government's rapid action to ensure our community can access health services in the safety of their homes via phone and telehealth services. This measure has allowed continuity of care for patients seeking the services of Accredited Practising Dietitians (APDs) for management of eating disorders and other chronic diseases.

The move to allow co-payments on 6 April 2020, whilst well-intended, requires further review. Currently, all patients accessing dietetic services under Medicare will still be bulk billed due to the requirement to bulk bill 'patients who are more vulnerable to COVID-19' whose definition includes patients with chronic health condition.

This definition includes patients seen under a:

- Chronic Disease Management Plan
- Eating Disorders Management Plan
- Indigenous Health Check

These patients are treated by an APD due to experiencing a chronic health condition which has affected or is expected to affect the patient for at least 6 months.

In its current form, APDs who deliver services under the Medicare Chronic Disease Management program already spend more time with patients than the funded, 20-minute allocation. Typically, an initial appointment takes an average of 55 minutes, with subsequent review appointments lasting 36 minutes (Brown et al. 2016 J Nutr Diet). However, when seeing a patient in person, dietitians are able to charge a gap fee (as appropriate), to ensure adequate nutrition intervention and support can be provided.

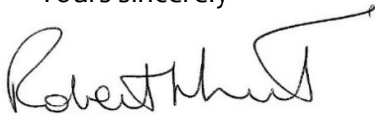
This additional time is vital to ensure the collection of sensitive medical and diet history information and to provide adequate nutrition counselling.

Providing the option for co-payments on telehealth services for 'patients who are more vulnerable to COVID-19' ensures Australians are able to access the best nutrition care for their needs.

I therefore request the requirement to bulk bill 'patients who are more vulnerable to COVID-19' is removed. At a minimum, those experiencing a chronic disease should be removed from the bulk billing 'patients who are more vulnerable to COVID-19' criteria.

Your urgent consideration of this request would be appreciated.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Robert Hunt". The signature is fluid and cursive, with a long horizontal stroke extending from the end of the name.

Robert Hunt  
Chief Executive Officer