

Telehealth and Medicare Psychologist sessions – Basic Information

(For country clients - 7 of 10 Medicare sessions per year now available via internet sessions.)

1. What is Telehealth? In this context, it means providing Psychologist services, under Medicare, for those living outside metropolitan areas. (Usually Medicare Psychologist services need to be done "in person" to be able to get a Medicare rebate.)
2. The Australian Federal Department of Health say "Telehealth mental health items will be available to people living in Monash Modified Model (MMM) regions four to seven. The MMM is a classification system that categorises metropolitan, regional, rural and remote areas according to both geographical remoteness and town size." (Broadly speaking this is people outside metropolitan areas¹);
3. To get a Medicare rebate for Psychologist sessions, the client needs to have a GP Mental Health Care Plan (MBS item No 2700, 2701, 2715, 2717, or 2712 for a review) before the first consultation;
4. To make use of Telehealth consultations, the client also needs to have Internet access, reliable enough to allow both visual and sound communication with the Psychologist;
5. Medicare requires that at least one of the first four (4) consultations are in person². In my case I say this will have to be the first consultation, to ensure we have all the paperwork (including signing a written agreement about Internet services) in place before doing internet sessions;
6. PLEASE NOTE: Psychologist sessions under Medicare are not "free". The \$84.80 Medicare rebate for a 50 minute plus session, barely covers business overheads, before paying the Psychologist. (The recommended fee, is currently \$254.00³, but I charge less - \$160 weekdays, \$180 Evening/Saturday);
7. The fee for the initial in person (i.e. face-to-face) appointment in one of the Perth locations would (for a weekday consultations) be \$160.00 which would be eligible for an \$84.80 Medicare rebate, i.e. a \$75.20 Gap;
8. Internet sessions would be charged at the same rate as for the usual "in person – in office" sessions, i.e. \$160 (weekday) or \$180 (evening or Saturday morning) with a \$84.80 Medicare rebate, and would need to be paid in advance;
9. A "Checklist" for deciding if, in your situation, you may be able to make use of the new Medicare Telehealth is over the page.

¹ See the website http://www.doctorconnect.gov.au/internet/otd/publishing.nsf/Content/MMM_locator to confirm you live within one of these areas.

² This would normally be at one of my offices in Perth, e.g. you are coming to Perth for other reasons.

³ The fees recommended by *The Australian Psychological Society* (APS) for a standard 50-60minute consultation is \$246. (till 30 June 2018);

