

Medical Board referral of systemic issue – no further action

The Medical Board of Australia was concerned that there may be a systemic problem with the way telephone clinical advice by Medical Practitioners working for Remote Health are documented in the clinical record, particularly when the patient cannot be identified. This followed an incident where a medical practitioner gave authorisation over the phone for medication to be dispensed to a patient, and where the identity of the patient was mistaken.

The assessment looked at 3 issues derived from the referral – identification of patients; on-call consultations; and record security. In relation to the identification of patients, the department advised that the process in place for staff to identify patients in the prison setting is for the nurse to use a minimum of 3 identifiers being the name, date of birth and IJIS number. The on-call medical practitioner is also required to identify the patient and this is usually by name, date of birth and HRN but there are other identifiers that can be used. In the case referred to AHPRA, this was not done; the nurse and medical practitioner accepted the name without checking. The Commissioner determined that satisfactory processes are in place to ensure patient identity is checked, and that this situation is unlikely to recur.