



## Shared care demonstration project

National Breast and Ovarian Cancer Centre *Shared care demonstration project* is an innovative project designed to explore shared care for patients who have completed treatment for early breast cancer or ductal carcinoma in situ (DCIS).

The project aims to trial and evaluate approaches to the delivery of shared care between primary and specialist clinicians for the follow-up of patients from three months after completion of hospital-based therapy for early breast cancer.

Shared care has the potential to promote and support continuity of cancer patient care, whole person care and equity of access to local evidence-based care.

### Information for health professionals

#### Purpose of follow-up after early breast cancer

The purpose of follow-up care after treatment for early breast cancer includes:

- early detection of local, regional or distant recurrence
- screening for a new primary breast cancer (in the ipsilateral or contralateral breast)
- detection and management of psychosocial distress, anxiety or depression
- detection and management of treatment-related side effects
- reviewing and updating family history information
- observation of outcomes of therapy
- reviewing treatment, including new treatments that may be appropriate for the patient.<sup>1</sup>

#### Supporting evidence for shared care

Shared care is the joint participation of primary and specialty care physicians in the planned delivery of care<sup>2</sup> and has been successfully and safely implemented across a range of health settings, including diabetes, paediatric oncology and obstetric care.

For women with breast cancer, follow-up care provided by a general practitioner (GP) has been found to be a safe and effective alternative to specialist follow-up with no differences in survival outcomes, breast cancer recurrences or serious clinical events.<sup>3</sup>

The increasing demand for specialist services combined with health workforce shortages requires the development of new service delivery models.

As a continuation of the important role of the GP in the multidisciplinary team, shared care has the potential to provide a safe and effective solution while facilitating equity of access to breast cancer care across Australia.

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## Resources to support shared care

Specialist and primary care clinicians involved in the National Breast and Ovarian Cancer Centre *Shared care demonstration project* will be provided with key resources to support quality care.

### Shared Care Plan

An individualised care plan that contains the key elements required to provide ongoing comprehensive care to a patient who has received treatment for early breast cancer.

### Rapid Access Request

Access to urgent specialist consultation is an integral part of the project. It is supported by a template to facilitate communication between the GP and specialist if a specific clinical issue requires urgent specialist advice or consultation.

Other National Breast and Ovarian Cancer Centre (NBOCC) resources to support evidence-based follow-up care include:

- *Recommendations for follow-up of early breast cancer.* NBOCC Surry Hills, NSW (March 2010)
- *Follow-up care for women with early breast cancer: a guide for general practitioners.* NBOCC Surry Hills, NSW (March 2010)
- *Principles of shared care.* NBOCC Surry Hills, NSW (March 2010)

## Medicare Benefits Schedule rebates

The Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) includes items to financially support clinician involvement in shared care.

The GP and specialist may hold a case conference at the commencement of shared care to discuss the joint approach to follow-up. This case conference provides an opportunity to agree on the roles and responsibilities of shared follow-up care and discuss the patient's individual shared care plan. It is also an opportunity to agree on methods of communication between the GP and specialist throughout follow-up, and in particular, to agree on a rapid access process for when follow-up raises a clinical issue that requires specialist consultation.

Relevant items on the MBS include 740, 742, 744, 825, 826, 828 and 721; the details of which can be accessed via [www.health.gov.au/mbsonline](http://www.health.gov.au/mbsonline)

## References

- <sup>1</sup> National Breast and Ovarian Cancer Centre (NBOCC) *Recommendations for follow-up of early breast cancer.* NBOCC Surry Hills, NSW (March 2010).
- <sup>2</sup> Smith, S. M., S. Allwright, et al. (2007). "Effectiveness of shared care across the interface between primary and specialty care in chronic disease management." *Cochrane Database Syst Rev*(3): CD004910.
- <sup>3</sup> National Breast and Ovarian Cancer Centre (2009). *Shared Care Literature Review.* Surry Hills, National Breast and Ovarian Cancer Centre.