



NEW ZEALAND MEDICAL ASSOCIATION

23 March 2011

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Dear Sarah

**Proposed amendments to the Maternity Referral Guidelines and processes for the transfer of care**

Thank you for the opportunity to comment on these amended guidelines. We are grateful for the extension of time in which to submit.

We have chosen not to comment on the clinical matters set out in the document as we believe the proper expertise to comment on this lies with the Colleges. Instead, our focus is solely on the decision to facilitate referrals to primary care.

The NZMA strongly endorses this proposal. There has been a lack of clarity for some years around referrals to general practice, resulting in some inappropriate referrals to other (secondary) specialties. This proposal will go some way towards addressing the problem.

However, the model will not function effectively without funding being attached to the referral.

In most referral situations there is an option for public referral. For a primary care maternity referral however this option would not be available. If the referral is for an issue related solely to a woman's pregnancy the practice cannot charge yet it is not possible to claim under Section 88 unless it is an emergency.

In regard to a health issue that has been aggravated by the woman's pregnancy or is not related to the pregnancy, while the practice can charge, there is a strong expectation of patients that this service should be funded under the Maternity Benefit.

Without funding being linked to the referral we believe this proposal is likely to fail.

We appreciate that the issue of funding was a matter outside the terms of reference for the expert working group. It is however a key matter that will determine whether the referral guidelines to primary practitioners stand or fall. We therefore ask that when the expert working group makes its report to government it asks that the Government also address the issue of funding.

Yours faithfully

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'Peter Foley', written in a cursive style.

Dr Peter Foley  
NZMA Chair