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Dear Healthcare Professional

Telephonic and Virtual consultation codes offered by Medscheme in light of the COVID-19 nationwide public health emergency

The Republic of South Africa, through the National Department of Health is responsible for gazetting and enforcing certain regulations during a nationwide public health emergency. In response to measures mentioned by the President of the Republic of South Africa and gazetted publications, Medscheme recognises the need for patients who require ongoing care and services while COVID-19 is still considered a nationwide public health emergency.

There are countless healthcare professionals that are trying to maintain medical support for their patients, in very trying and concerning conditions. However, we do need to take cognisance of the fact that many healthcare professionals, by providing ongoing medical support for their patients, are putting themselves and their families at risk of COVID-19 transmission and contamination.

In an attempt to lessen the risk, with the above in mind, Medscheme is implementing in-house telephonic and virtual consultation codes for certain health care professionals who do not have such codes allocated in their respective national and private coding schema. These codes are applicable where communication technology is used to provide services to patients during the COVID-19 nationwide public health emergency using any non-face-to-face remote communication platforms that are available to connect with patients, inter alia telephonically, Skype, and Facetime or any other form of virtual communication.

Medscheme, in partnership with our affiliate solution providers, have developed a digital platform to facilitate virtual consultations. Further communication on this solution will be released soon. For more information, please visit <https://portal.allegra.co.za/products>.

Health care professionals are requested to please exercise discretion in respect of telephonic and virtual communication provided for any reason, regardless of whether the service is related to the diagnosis and treatment of health conditions related to COVID-19, as well as keep detailed personal records of all telephonic and virtual consultations.

We urge you, for correct reporting and monitoring as expected by NICD, to use appropriate ICD10 coding, namely:

- **U07.1 COVID-19** - virus identified
- **U07.2 COVID-19** - virus not identified
 - Clinically/epidemiologically diagnosed COVID-19 infection
 - Probable COVID-19 infection
 - Suspected COVID-19 infection

Keeping aligned with the update circulated by the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) on 26th of March about the HPCSA Guidelines for Healthcare Practitioners¹, Medscheme is conscious that certain healthcare professionals will be able to offer these types of services and as a result will be allowed to use these in-house codes.

These would include:

1. All medical doctors – GP's and Specialists
2. Psychologists
3. Social Workers
4. Occupational Therapists
5. Physiotherapists
6. Speech and Hearing Therapists
7. Audiologists
8. Nurse Practitioners
9. Dieticians
10. Pharmacies offering in-house nurse consultations
11. Chiropractors
12. Biokineticists

¹ <https://www.hpcsa-blogs.co.za/covid-19-hpcsa-guidelines-for-healthcare-practitioners/>

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The following provisions would be applicable in the instances where these in-house codes are used:

- Medical Doctors (GP's, Specialists and Psychiatrists) will continue using code 0130 for telephone consultations.
 - Except for COVID-19 possible infections, Telehealth should be practiced where there is an already established practitioner-patient relationship. HPCSA further states, where such a relationship does not exist, practitioners may still consult using Telehealth provided that such consultations are done in the best interest of the patient Psychologists whom can use the codes for new and established patients.
 - Psychiatrists that can also add codes 2957, 2974 or 297 for individual psychotherapy to Medscheme's virtual code or code 0130
- These codes cannot be billed if the service is offered within the post-operative period.
- The usual consultation codes 0190- 0192 and 0173- 0175, 0161- 0169 with add-on codes 0145- 0147, consultation, assessment and therapy codes cannot be billed together with non-face-to-face services.
- Codes can only be billed once per day per patient.

The codes and rates in Annexure are CPT based with some adaptations made to suit the South African context.

For full description of these codes and applicable rates please see **Annexure A**.

For details of individual schemes rates relating to Code 0130: Telephonic consultations for Medical Professionals: Drs and Specialists, please see **Annexure B**.

Please note that these codes will be effective from 3rd of April 2020 however they will be backdated to the 15th of March 2020.

Kind regards,

Dr Claude Ndlovu

General Manager: Health Professions Strategy Unit

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ANNEXURE A

Medscheme Telephonic and Virtual consultation codes with applicable rates

| Medscheme In-House Code | Medscheme In-House Code description | 2020 Medscheme rates |
|-------------------------|--|----------------------|
| 0130 | <u>Telephonic consultations (all hours)</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doctors (GP's and Specialists) | See "Annexure B" |
| 078330 | <u>Virtual consultations (all hours):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Doctors (GP's and Specialists) | R 300.00 |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physiotherapists, Social Workers, Occupational Therapists, Dieticians, Speech and Hearing Therapists, Audiologists, Chiropractors, Biokineticists | R 236.05 |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychologists | R 265.97 |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nurse Practitioners | R 223.30 |
| 078340 | <u>Telephonic consultations (all hours):</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Physiotherapists, Social Workers, Occupational Therapists, Dieticians, Speech and Hearing Therapists, Audiologists, Chiropractors, Biokineticists | R 236.05 |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Psychologists | R 265.97 |
| | <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nurse Practitioners | R 223.30 |
| 078332 | <u>Telephonic and Virtual Private Nurse Practitioner consultations with Medical Practitioners:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • GP and Specialists | R 200.00 |
| 078335 | <u>Telephonic and Virtual Private Nurse Practitioner consultations with Medical Practitioners:</u> <ul style="list-style-type: none"> • Nurse Practitioners | R 90.00 |

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ANNEXURE B

Table of 2020 Scheme rates for Code 0130: Telephonic Consultations (All Hours) for all medical doctors (GP's and Specialists)

| Scheme | 2020 Tariff Rate |
|-------------------|-------------------------|
| AECI | R 287.00 |
| Barloworld | R 283.40 |
| Bonitas | R281.60 |
| Fedhealth | R281.50 |
| Horizon | R293.70 |
| Hosmed | R 325.40 |
| MBMed | R 282.70 |
| Medshield | R 436.60 |
| Nedgroup | R 287.00 |
| Parmed | R 279.80 |
| Polmed | R 268.80 |
| SABC | R 282.00 |
| Sasolmed | R 281.60 |

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