

CRITERIA FOR GOOD PRACTICE IN ELECTRONIC REFERRAL

Electronic referrals allow General Practitioners to refer patients for public outpatient appointments directly to the eight designated cancer centres or to specific hospital departments nationwide. The electronic forms are based on the agreed NCCP/HIQA/ICGP forms and are available for use in the four accredited Practice Management Systems and in HealthlinkOnline.

Electronic referrals aim to provide:

- Faster and easier access to a consultant opinion
- Better hospital triage of patients referred by GPs
- Timely access to specialist care
- Improved communication between consultant and GP

It is essential that operational criteria exist to ensure that this service runs smoothly and that patient needs are to the fore. Therefore, when using electronic referrals please adhere to the following:

1. Use the electronic facility exclusively where this is available.
2. When an electronic referral is made it is not necessary to send a hardcopy referral letter or form.
3. Check that you have the most up to date version of your GP practice software system.
4. When you send a referral you should receive an immediate acknowledgement that it has been received by Healthlink. If you don't get an acknowledgment you should contact Healthlink for technical advice.
5. You should receive a response to the referral within a designated timeframe (5 working days). If you don't get a response you should contact the relevant hospital/centre.
6. The electronic form requires the GP to insert certain standard information so that the consultant can form an opinion as to the urgency of the patient's symptoms. Please complete the form fully.
7. GP should refer the patient to one hospital/centre only. This should be in consultation with the patient.
8. Confirm the patient's demographic information is correct so that the hospital can make contact with them.
9. The electronic general referral allows you to attach laboratory and radiology reports. Ideally, an attached lab result should contain the following 4 data items: Test name, Test Result, Units of Measure & Date sample was taken. Laboratory results manually entered by you/your team may not necessarily include all these items; those received electronically will contain these 4 data items.