

Statement from a spokesperson for the Medical Board of Australia:

Telehealth and online prescribing have changed dramatically in the last decade. To keep patients safe, we need to close the gap that's sprung up between online prescribing business models and good medical practice.

The Board is concerned about asynchronous prescribing and has recently consulted on a revised guideline for telehealth that includes the following:

If you have not consulted with the patient

Prescribing or providing healthcare for a patient with whom you have never consulted, whether face to-face, via video or telephone is not good practice and is not supported by the Board.

This includes requests for medication communicated by text, email or online that do not take place in real-time and are based on the patient completing a health questionnaire but where the practitioner has never spoken with the patient.

Any practitioner who prescribes for patients in these circumstances must be able to explain how the prescribing and management of the patient was appropriate and necessary in the circumstances.

From the industry-driven campaigns we're seeing in response to our consultation, it looks like our focus on standards and patient safety is challenging some commercial business models.

The Board has not yet finalised its position. It is reviewing the consultation feedback and will make a decision in the coming months.