



## Factsheet

# Medical Specialists – CME (COVID)

### Background information

The COVID-19 pandemic continues to limit access to national and international conferences, travel and educational activities. This has impacted Medical Specialists CME entitlements. Monash Health continues to update this documentation and advice, in consultation with the Dept of Health and other Health Services in Victoria, throughout this situation.

### What is happening

The Department of Health have provided advice and guidance on updated authority and authorisations for carry over of CME support entitlement and the ability to claim purchases of information technology devices not usually reimbursable under the CME support arrangement.

### Who the change will affect

- Medical Specialists (Senior Medical staff)

### When the change will take effect

- Updated changes become effective 1 October 2021 for FY2021-22 entitlement year

### What action do you need to take?

- Continue to check for updates to this advice.
- Raise any concerns or questions with Monash Doctors Workforce CME team.

Please contact [monashdoctors\\_cme@monashhealth.org](mailto:monashdoctors_cme@monashhealth.org) with any queries.

### Overseas Travel

- For the latest and current outward bound overseas travel advice, check the [smart traveller website](#)
- All new business related travel including CME related travel overseas, must comply with state quarantine requirements.  
*Please refer to [Department of Health website](#) for further information.*
- Any financial implications and additional leave requirements due to disruptions of travel plans will be borne by the individual. Please ensure adequate insurance is in place.
- Leave is to be approved by Unit Director as per usual to ensure operational requirements are met.
- Failure to heed this directive may result in that person breaching the Service's insurance cover and possibly sustaining significant personal expense.
- The Medical Specialist must notify the CME team of any reimbursements by airlines, conferences or hotels related to cancelled CME activity. (See FAQ's below)
- Staff failing to inform may be in receipt of a taxable income in the FY 2020-21 (financial year).

### Domestic travel

- Travel within Australia for CME purposes, is permitted in compliance with the relevant Public Health Directions on the date of travel.
- The risks of cancellation of conferences or flights, cost of quarantine or being stranded interstate, must be borne by the Senior Medical Staff.



- Senior Medical Staff are advised to protect themselves from financial loss by booking flexible flights and accommodation options and negotiating cancellation terms with the conference providers.
- Cancellation fees may be claimed from your CME allowance balance.

## Frequently asked Questions

### 1. Due to cancellation or travel restrictions related to the COVID-19 pandemic, I cannot attend my conference/educational event.

- a. Am I responsible for seeking a refund from the conference organisers, airlines and/or hotel?

**Yes**, you are responsible, regardless of whether or not you have already been reimbursed by Monash Health.

### 2. What do I do with the refund from the conference organisers, airlines and/or hotel after I have received it?

- a. If you have already been reimbursed by Monash Health, after you personally paid for an approved future CME activity, you have a legal obligation to forward the returned money to Monash Health. Unreturned funds could be considered as income by the Australian Taxation Office; undeclared income can result in penalties imposed. Upon confirmation of receipt of the refund, the CME available balance will be adjusted in the CME Database.

Refunds are to be made to the bank account below:

BSB: 033299      A/C: 630170  
Account Name: Monash Health

#### Note:

*Reference for the payment must state CME and your employee number (e.g. CME 12345).*

*A copy of the remittance for the refund should be sent to Medical workforce ([monashdoctors\\_cme@monashhealth.org](mailto:monashdoctors_cme@monashhealth.org)) and Finance – Sheryl Mahony ([sheryl.mahony@monashhealth.org](mailto:sheryl.mahony@monashhealth.org)) and [david.anderson@monashhealth.org](mailto:david.anderson@monashhealth.org) and to your program's business manager in finance.*

- b. If you have **submitted a claim**, after you personally paid for a cancelled CME activity, but it has not yet been reimbursed by Monash Health, you may keep any refunds you have received and cancel your claim by contacting the CME team ([monashdoctors\\_cme@monashhealth.org](mailto:monashdoctors_cme@monashhealth.org)).
- c. If you have **not yet submitted** a claim to Monash Health, after you personally paid for the cancelled CME activity, you may keep any refunds you have received.

### 3. What will Monash Health do with the money refunded to me by the conference organisers, airlines and/or hotel?

- a. Any returned CME monies will be re-credited to your CME support entitlement/balance.



**4. I have applied to the conference organisers, airlines and/or hotel for a refund. They have taken out a cancellation fee – can I apply to have this reimbursed from Monash Health?**

**Yes** you can claim the cancellation fee from your CME support entitlement.

- b. If you have already submitted a claim, irrespective of whether it has yet been reimbursed, after you personally paid for an approved future CME activity, then you will need to submit an additional claim for reimbursement for the cancellation costs/fee.
- c. If you have not yet submitted a claim for reimbursement, after you personally paid for a cancelled CME activity, you can add the cancellation fee to your claim form and it will be reimbursed if the CME activity meets the standard approval criteria. The cancellation fee amount will be deducted from your CME support entitlement/balance as per any other CME costs.

**5. I had added personal travel to my approved CME leave. Will Monash Health reimburse me these personal travel costs?**

- a. **No**, personal travel costs will not be reimbursed by Monash Health. For this reason, it is advisable to have travel insurance for these costs that covers COVID-19 related cancellation.

**6. What if I don't get a reimbursement but am provided with a credit for future travel, say from an airline?**

- a. If you have already been reimbursed by Monash Health after you personally paid for an approved future CME activity, you must inform the CME team so that this can be declared and recorded in your CME entitlement. In the future, you would then apply as per normal for permission to use the "credit" to attend an approved CME activity. An undeclared credit could be construed as income by the tax office; undeclared income can result in penalties being imposed.
- b. If you have not yet submitted a claim, for the future CME activity which you have personally paid for, you may keep the "credit" for yourself for an activity of your choice OR you may request reimbursement from Monash Health. Contact the CME team to discuss how a personal "credit" is recorded for future use and how a reimbursement can be made.
- c. If you have submitted a claim, but have not yet been reimbursed by Monash Health for the future CME activity which you have personally paid for, you may keep the credit for yourself for an activity of your choice OR you may request reimbursement from Monash Health. Contact the CME team. They will cancel your outstanding claim, and discuss how a personal "credit" is recorded for future use and how a reimbursement can be made.

**7. My conference has been cancelled. Will Monash Health allow my conference leave to be deferred and/or accumulate?**

- a. Yes, the AMA Victoria - Victorian Public Health Sector - Medical Specialists Enterprise Agreement 2018-2021 covers this eventuality under Section 59.2 (a) CME leave is cumulative over two years.

**8. If I attend a virtual conference, can my conference days be taken as Conference leave?**



- a. **Yes**, you can book conference leave to attend conferences online, as you would if you were attending in person. No travel days can be taken as leave for virtual conferences.

*NB. Conference Leave will be not granted to watch recorded webinars/ conference.*

#### **9. Can I claim head phones now that I am online teaching and working from home?**

- a. **No**, as of 1 July 2021 expenses such as head phones and air pods are not claimable. Purchases made prior to 1 July 2021 can be submitted for reimbursement (up to the end date for Financial Year (FY) 2020-21 claims on September 30, 2021).

#### **10. Can I purchase software for my home office?**

- a. Yes, the purchase of basic Microsoft Office package (i.e. 'Home and Student' or equivalent) would be generally reimbursable, whereas the purchase of a more advanced package (e.g. 'Premium' or 'Home and Business' or equivalent) would need to be justified.

#### **11. My Laptop doesn't have enough memory storage. Can I purchase extra storage under CME?**

- a. **No**, as of 1 July 2021 expenses such as memory storage or external hard drives are not claimable. Purchases made prior to 1 July 2021 can be submitted for reimbursement (up to the end date for FY 2020-21 claims on September 30, 2021).

#### **12. If I purchase a new laptop, can I claim any extended warranty?**

- a. **Yes**, extended warranties and protection devices are claimable under CME support, where reasonable and necessary. Where an extended warranty has been claimed, a new technological device of a similar nature will not be eligible for CME support reimbursement until the extended warranty has expired, unless loss or damage to that items falls outside the purchased warranty. You will need to provide justification in writing.

#### **13. Can I claim add-ons for my tablet?**

- a. **Yes**, for the Tablet (Surface Pro or iPad), stylus/iPad pen and keyboard, as well as connectors/dongles necessary for CME purposes.

#### **14. Will my unused CME balance rollover to the next financial year?**

- a. The Department of Health has given authorisation for Specialists to carry-over up to \$10,000 of their 'un-claimed' CME Support from the 2020-21 financial year into the 2021-22 financial year (with the following caveats)
  - that the carried-over amount can only be used for CME-related activities that involve multiple participants – that is, conferences, seminars or workshops, including those conducted online – and/or require interstate or overseas air travel (including for Sabbatical Leave purposes); AND
  - that the amount carried over by any Specialist cannot exceed their CME



Support 'cap' for 2020-21 (inclusive of previously carried-over un-claimed CME Support).

- b. The \$10,000 carry-over amount is per Specialist – it is not pro-rated for Fractional Specialists (subject to it not exceeding a Fractional Specialist's actual entitlement or unclaimed component thereof per the caveats above).

**15. Can I claim a desktop computer and other information technology devices or accessories to support my CME activities at home?**

- a. **No**, As of 1 July 2021 desktop computer, monitor(s), computer keyboards, network storage devices are not claimable.
- b. Purchases made prior to 1 July 2021 can be submitted for reimbursement (up to the end date for Financial Year (FY) 2020-21 claims on September 30, 2021). All amounts claimed for desktops and information technology devices or accessories will be subject to Fringe benefits tax (FBT) and deducted from the Specialist's CME Support entitlement.
- c. Fringe benefits tax (FBT) will be deducted from the FY 2021-22 balance, if there are insufficient funds left available for FY 2020-21.

**16. Can I claim information technology devices or accessories without the purchase of a Desktop?**

- a. **No**, As of 1 July 2021 any Information technology devices and accessories such as speakers, monitor, webcam, printer, keyboard are not claimable.

Purchases made prior to 1 July 2021 can be submitted for reimbursement (up to the end date for FY 2020-21 claims on September 30, 2021).

**17. How is Fringe Benefits Tax (FBT) calculated for desktops and technological Information technology devices/ accessories and how would this be applied to my CME support entitlement?**

- a. Assuming a \$5000 claim, including \$4000 desktop and \$1000 in accessories
  - Grossed-up taxable value of claim = \$5,000.00 x 2.0802 (FBT Type 1 gross-up rate) = \$10,401.00
  - FBT liability (hospitality liability which is passed on to SMS) = \$10,401.00 X 47% (FBT rate ending 30/06/2021) = \$4,888.47
  - Total CME claim = \$5,000.00 + \$4,888.47 (FBT liability) = \$9,888.47
- b. That is, the Specialist will be reimbursed \$5000 and Monash Health would need to pay an FBT liability of \$4,888.47 which would be taken from the Specialist's CME support entitlement.

NB. FBT will be deducted from next Financial Year (2021-22), if there are insufficient funds left in the current Financial Year (2020-21) CME allowance.