

## **Referral protocols for eye care services**

This document is designed to assist in determining the best pathway of care for a patient requiring treatment for eye conditions.

### **Factors to consider**

The following factors should be considered when developing a referral pathway for eye care patients:

- Existing pathways and referral processes, including an eye care service directory
- The need for follow up appointments
- The number and type of permanent services available in a region
- Whether there are visiting eye care services and their schedule
- The cost of service providers (eg private practitioners, bulk billing practices or public hospital care)
- Waiting times for public eye care services particularly in local hospitals
- Availability of transport and access to eye care services, and the ability of patients to attend follow-up appointments

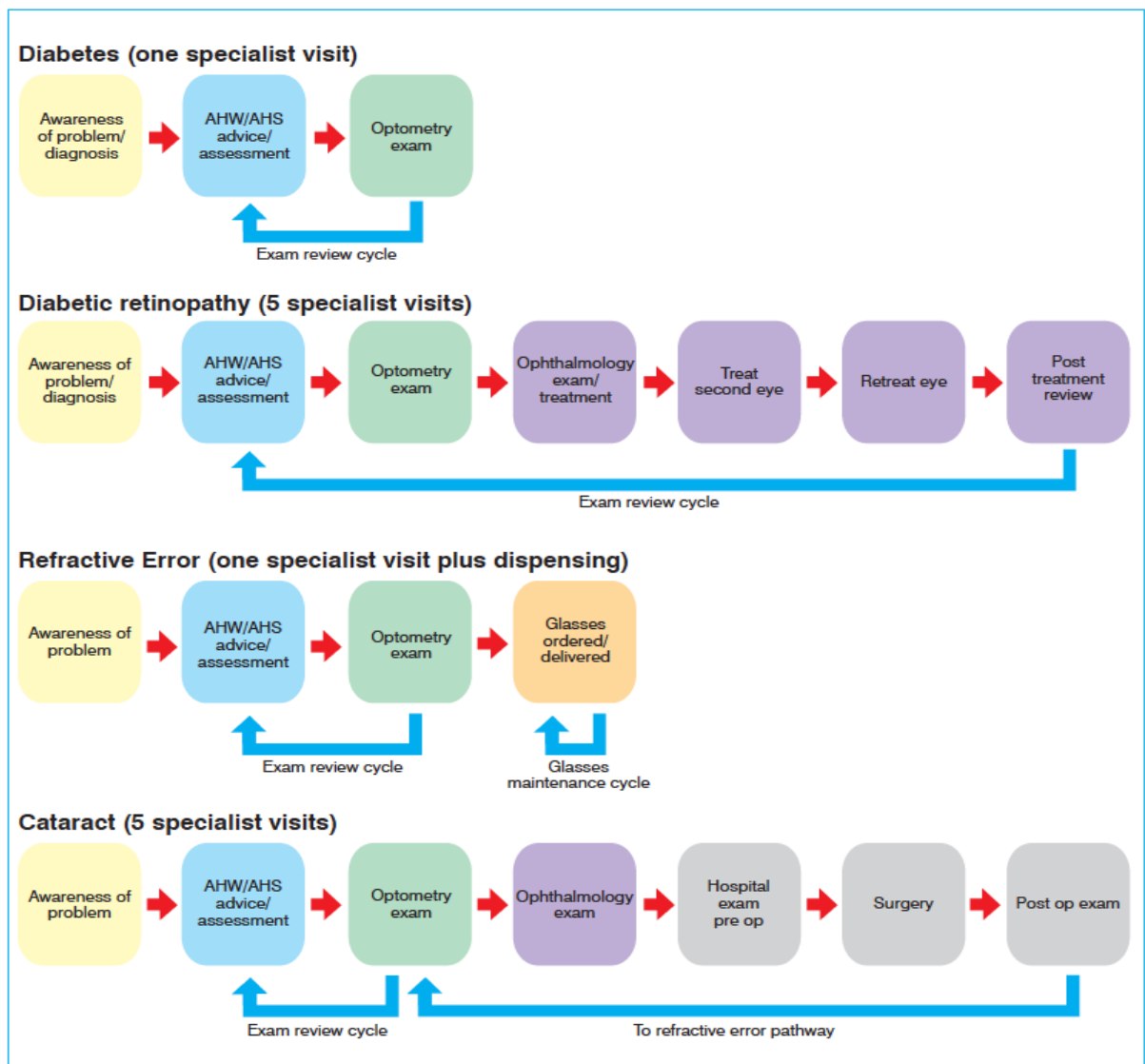
### **Steps in designing a referral protocol**

- 1- Identify current services (visiting and permanent)
- 2- Identify the coordinator or care manager to track eye care referrals.
- 3- Establish when, how and to whom referral should be made
- 4- Check whether service bulk-billing or private, and contact to see if bulk billing rate negotiable
- 5- Determine any wait times and assess if they may adversely affect patient care
- 6- Consider particular eye care conditions and specific factors eg number of follow-up appointments for diabetic retinopathy
- 7- Establish a procedure to check referral process has been completed and treatment received

## Examples of referral pathways

The type of eye condition that a patient has influences the referral pathway that is required. The following chart illustrates possible pathways of care for conditions such as cataract and diabetic retinopathy.

NOTE that this diagram is merely a guide and will depend on individual clinical care decisions.



This picture 'The Pathways for Eye care' represents the eye care referral pathway as shown by IEHU Roadmap to Close the Gap for Vision, January 2013 page 24: Taylor, H.R., et al., The Roadmap to Close the Gap for Vision (Full Report). 2012, Melbourne School of Population Health, University of Melbourne: Melbourne