

## Referral to a Medical Specialist in Queensland – Video Script

**Alina:** Hi, I'm Alina. Today together with Inna, a doctor from Ukraine, we will talk about how to see a medical specialist in Queensland, Australia.

**Inna:** Hi!

**Alina:** I have recently arrived in Australia and I found the health system here quite different to the one I'm used to in Ukraine.

**Inna:** Yes, I understand, it's really different from what we are used to. But do not worry, with my help and explanation hopefully, soon you will understand the whole process and find that being a patient in Australian medical system is quite beneficial.

I was a gynecologist in Ukraine, and I'm not registered to work as a doctor here in Australia (yet), and even though I've been here for several years, sometimes I find it difficult so don't be afraid to ask questions.

**Alina:** One of the main things I noticed that it is different seeing a Specialist in Australia.

In Ukraine, we could go straight to see some specialist Doctors without a referral but in Australia I noticed we need a referral from a GP.

**Inna:** Yes, that's right. The GP needs to write a letter to refer you and you need to give it to the Specialist before or at your first appointment.

**Alina:** In Ukraine we have public and private health systems, but what is the difference here and how does the system work?

**Inna:** You can choose where you are referred to, and in a public hospital it is free with your Medicare card.

But to see a private specialist, it may be faster but there is a fee so make sure you talk about this with your GP.

Remember if you need an interpreter, just ask for one – it's free.

**Alina:** And what about the waiting list?

**Inna:** Each specialist has their own process for accepting referrals and assessing how urgent your medical needs are so it's best to ask your GP for more information on how your referral will be processed.

**Alina:** So, if I get referred to the public hospital, what happens next and how long will I have to wait?

**Inna:** When a public hospital receives the referral from your GP, a specialist will assess how urgent your medical needs are and put you into a category from 1-3. They will send you a letter to notify

you that you are now on the wait list.

**Category 1** means urgent, and they will aim to give you a specialist appointment within 30 days.

**Category 2**, your condition is assessed as semi-urgent. They will aim to give you a specialist appointment within 90 days.

**Category 3** means non-urgent and is the most common category to be placed in. This means they will aim to give you a specialist appointment within 365 days.

**Alina:** How will I know if I'm still on the waitlist or when I will be seen?

**Inna:** The Specialist will send you letters and text messages. Make sure you reply to them, or you may lose your place on a wait list.

If you lose your place, you will need to ask your GP to send a new referral letter.

There can be months of waiting between seeing a GP and a Specialist.

**Alina:** Ok, that's a long time! What if my condition gets worse while I'm waiting?

**Inna:** Make sure you talk to your GP again because the waitlist category may be updated when your GP provides new information.

**Alina:** What if people don't have a Medicare card?

**Inna:** It is different in different states of Australia. Fortunately, the Queensland government made a special policy for Ukrainians who have recently arrived in Australia on a temporary visa without Medicare, so they can access an ambulance and public hospitals in Queensland for free.

**Alina:** Are there any other options if I have pain or my health condition gets worse?

**Inna:** You have a few options. You can:

- Talk to your GP
- There is a phone number you can call to speak with a nurse for advice 24 hours a day, 7 days a week called **13 HEALTH. The number is 13 43 25 84.**
- Visit your local pharmacy for general advice about minor injuries or illnesses
- If you have a non-emergency health concern, call a Home Doctor service that can do home visits overnight while your GP is closed.
- If it's a health emergency, call an ambulance on **Triple Zero 000** or go to the Emergency Department at your local public hospital.

**Alina:** Thank you for the useful information!

**Inna:** Thank you!