LETTER TEMPLATES

**for communicating with specialists about the College of Physicians and Surgeons of Ontario *Advice to the Profession: Continuity of Care***

These templates have been adapted from letters created by Ontario family physicians to support family physicians in communicating their appropriate scope of work. The templates focus on reminding specialists of their roles and responsibilities that were recently clarified in the Ontario College of Physicians and Surgeons (CPSO) [updated **Advice to the Profession on Continuity of Care**](https://www.cpso.on.ca/Physicians/Policies-Guidance/Policies/Continuity-of-Care/Advice-to-the-Profession-Continuity-of-Care). The wording is intended to be a suggestion of what could be used, and family physicians should feel free to tailor these letters to address the specific issues affecting individual practice concerns to enhance collaboration with specialists.

Refer to our [**full resource here**](https://ontariofamilyphysicians.ca/wp-content/uploads/2024/02/ocfp-continuity-of-care-practice-resources-02-24.pdf)for a comprehensive overview of the CPSO updates.

**How to use these letters:**

1. **select the topic of your interest**
2. **press and hold the Ctrl key down while you click the mouse**
3. **edit as needed or cut and paste into your own document or EMR system.**

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| --- | --- |
| 01 | [Referrals](#referrals) |
| 02 | [**Ordering Tests**](#ordering) |
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Insert practice name & information

Dear Dr. (insert name),

Re: (insert patient identifier)

I received your note declining my referral request to arrange for a consultation for the above-mentioned patient. You noted that the referral request\_\_\_\_\_ (insert reason here as applicable, i.e., included incorrect or outdated referral forms, did not include \_\_\_\_ information, etc.)

I wanted to bring your attention to newly updated advice from [CPSO on Continuity of Care](https://www.cpso.on.ca/Physicians/Policies-Guidance/Policies/Continuity-of-Care/Advice-to-the-Profession-Continuity-of-Care). It notes how *all physicians are facing significant challenges as clinical and administrative workload increase and as pressure on the health system continues to rise,* the referring and consulting physicians both *share a responsibility in ensuring patients can access the care they need*.

To streamline the process and avoid unnecessary delays, I request that you accept my consultation request “*even if there are minor issues with the request, e.g., incorrect or outdated referral forms*” ([CPSO](https://www.cpso.on.ca/Physicians/Policies-Guidance/Policies/Continuity-of-Care/Advice-to-the-Profession-Continuity-of-Care)). Asking that I make a new referral contributes to the extraordinary strain and administrative burden family practices are under and the CPSO policy states: “*Rather than having the referring physician make a new referral, there may be opportunities for the consultant physician to work with the referring physician to clarify any outstanding questions*.”

Add any additional requested information about the referral, if applicable. If there are any additional details you require, please contact me (note how you would like to be contacted), and I will promptly provide the necessary information.

I believe that working together to address any outstanding questions is in the best interest of our patients and I appreciate your understanding in navigating these challenges. I look forward to our continued collaboration within a health system that is increasingly challenging. Feel free to reach out if you would like to discuss this further.

Sincerely,

Dr. (insert name)

Insert practice name & information

Dear Dr. (insert name), Re: (patient identifier)

Thank you for your thorough and helpful consultation note on the above-mentioned patient. Although I am always eager to collaborate with you in the care of our mutual patients, I will leave the ordering of investigations you recommended in your consult to you.

Include the relevant tests and imaging, where applicable

You’ll note that the recently updated advice from [CPSO on Continuity of Care](https://www.cpso.on.ca/Physicians/Policies-Guidance/Policies/Continuity-of-Care/Advice-to-the-Profession-Continuity-of-Care) explicitly clarified that: “*Generally, any physician who determines a test is needed is responsible for ordering that test, including tracking the results and managing any follow up that stems from that test*. *B*y ordering tests that they themselves have deemed necessary, physicians ensure that patient care is not unnecessarily delayed, and that their colleagues are not required to receive results or manage care that falls outside their scope of practice.”

Include the following, if desired: I appreciate being copied to receive test results; however, as per the [CPSO](https://www.cpso.on.ca/Physicians/Policies-Guidance/Policies/Continuity-of-Care/Advice-to-the-Profession-Continuity-of-Care)“*it should be clear that I have no additional responsibilities in regard to the tests or results.”*

Your expertise in this specialized area is greatly appreciated. Please contact me if you would like to discuss this further.

Sincerely,

Dr. (insert name)

Insert practice name & information

Dear Dr. (insert name),

Re: (insert patient identifier)

I am writing to inform you that I have received a copy of the investigation result for our above-mentioned patient. You have asked me to follow up on these investigations that you ordered: Include the relevant tests and imaging, where applicable. I will defer follow-up on these results to you because it introduces the potential for delays, unnecessary complexity and risk to patient safety for me to review specialized tests that you ordered and are in a better position to interpret and act on.

You’ll note that the recently updated advice from [CPSO on Continuity of Care](https://www.cpso.on.ca/Physicians/Policies-Guidance/Policies/Continuity-of-Care/Advice-to-the-Profession-Continuity-of-Care) explicitly clarified that: “*Generally, any physician who determines a test is needed is responsible for ordering that test, including tracking the results and managing any follow up that stems from that test*. *B*y ordering tests that they themselves have deemed necessary, physicians ensure that patient care is not unnecessarily delayed, and that their colleagues are not required to receive results or manage care that falls outside their scope of practice.”

This is also in keeping with [OHIP’s Schedule of Benefits](https://www.health.gov.on.ca/en/pro/programs/ohip/sob/physserv/sob_master.pdf)(page GP15) which states that: "*being available to provide follow-up*" and “*making arrangements for any related assessments, procedures or therapy, and/or interpreting results*" are the “*responsibility of the physician who is billing for the insured service*” (i.e., the assessment or consultation).

Include the following, if desired: I appreciate being copied on test requisitions; however, as per the [CPSO](https://www.cpso.on.ca/Physicians/Policies-Guidance/Policies/Continuity-of-Care/Advice-to-the-Profession-Continuity-of-Care), i*t should be clear that I have no additional responsibilities in regard to the tests or results.”*

Your help is appreciated and valued, and most needed within a health system that is increasingly challenging. I hope that we can continue to collaborate in the best interests of our patients going forward. Please contact me if you would like to discuss this further.

With many thanks, Sincerely,

Dr. (insert name)

Insert practice name & information

Dear Dr. (insert name), Re: (patient identifier)

Thank you for your thorough and helpful consultation note regarding the above-mentioned patient. I have received your request that I arrange a referral to (Include details of referral). Although I am always eager to collaborate with you in the care of our mutual patients, I will defer to you to directly coordinate the subspecialist referral. I rely on your expertise for referrals to consultants according to your clinical judgement and scope of practice.

You’ll also note the recently updated advice from [CPSO on Continuity of Care](https://www.cpso.on.ca/Physicians/Policies-Guidance/Policies/Continuity-of-Care/Advice-to-the-Profession-Continuity-of-Care) clarified that once a consultant has accepted a referral and assessed the patient, *“the consultant physician rather than the referring physician is responsible for making the referral if they determine after an assessment that subspecialist care is needed*.” As you have seen the patient and determined that further consultations are required, I request that you follow through with that referral.

Your expertise in this specialized area is greatly appreciated. Please contact me if you would like to discuss this further.

Sincerely,

Dr. (insert name)

Insert practice name & information

Dear Dr. (insert name),

Re: (insert patient identifier)

Thank you for your care of our mutual patient. I am writing to kindly request that you send me the consultation report as soon as possible so that I have the necessary information to continue to provide safe and effective care for our mutual patient.

I wanted to bring to your attention the [CPSO policy on Transitions in Care](https://www.cpso.on.ca/Physicians/Policies-Guidance/Policies/Transitions-in-Care)documentation requirements. Notably, consultant physicians are required to: “*distribute the consultation report and any subsequent follow-up reports in a timely manner, urgently, if necessary, but no later than 30 days after an assessment or a new finding or change in the patient’s care management plan. What is timely will depend on the nature of the patient’s condition and any risk to the patient if there is a delay in sharing the report*.”

I understand that all healthcare providers, including yourself, are facing significant workload pressures, and I appreciate your dedication to your patients, however, the time to request these notes takes away time that we would otherwise dedicate to direct patient care. Include the following, if desired: This is my first/second/third request for this consult note.

I appreciate your expertise and hope to continue to collaborate in the best interests of our patients.

Sincerely,

Dr. (insert name)