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NEW STRATEGY NEEDED

Post COVID-19, B.C.'s healthy ministry must revise its specialist referral strategy rather than facing unorganized scrambling with inherent costs to the province's healthcare system.

Currently, specialist referrals have a six month lifespan between the date of the referral and the actual date of the appointment. If it has been over six months since the referral, even with COVID-19, and no specialist consultation has occurred, redirecting patients back to their family physician creates four adverse scenarios, each with inherent costs:

- Overwhelming requests for access to a patient's family physician;
- Redundant MSP billings at the original care provider level;
- Based on a first-come-first serve basis for scenario one, this has the potential for a further re-queuing delay in accessing the specialist, which is subject to the nature of the referral, may worsen the patient's condition and potentially increase MSP costs in an attempt to address their potentially deteriorating health condition;
- An alternate patient strategy will simply attempt to access specialists through the expensive emergency room option.

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