

# ***Medicare Benefits Schedule***

***Effective - 01 July 2016***

***Items: 10986, 701, 703, 705, 707***

***Created on 10/08/2016***

## **G1.1 The Medicare Benefits Schedule - Introduction**

### **Schedules of Services**

Each professional service contained in the Schedule has been allocated a unique item number. Located with the item number and description for each service is the Schedule fee and Medicare benefit, together with a reference to an explanatory note relating to the item (if applicable).

If the service attracts an anaesthetic, the word (Anaes.) appears following the description. Where an operation qualifies for the payment of benefits for an assistant, the relevant items are identified by the inclusion of the word (Assist.) in the item description. Medicare benefits are not payable for surgical assistance associated with procedures which have not been so identified.

In some cases two levels of fees are applied to the same service in General Medical Services, with each level of fee being allocated a separate item number. The item identified by the letter "S" applies in the case where the procedure has been rendered by a recognised specialist in the practice of his or her specialty and the patient has been referred. The item identified by the letter "G" applies in any other circumstance.

Higher rates of benefits are also provided for consultations by a recognised consultant physician where the patient has been referred by another medical practitioner or an approved dental practitioner (oral surgeons).

Differential fees and benefits also apply to services listed in Category 5 (Diagnostic Imaging Services). The conditions relating to these services are set out in Category 5.

### **Explanatory Notes**

Explanatory notes relating to the Medicare benefit arrangements and notes that have general application to services are located at the beginning of the schedule, while notes relating to specific items are located at the beginning of each Category. While there may be a reference following the description of an item to specific notes relating to that item, there may also be general notes relating to each Group of items.

## **G1.2 Medicare - an outline**

The Medicare Program ('Medicare') provides access to medical and hospital services for all Australian residents and certain categories of visitors to Australia. **The Department of Human Services** administers Medicare and the payment of Medicare benefits. The major elements of Medicare are contained in the *Health Insurance Act 1973*, as amended, and include the following:

- (a). Free treatment for public patients in public hospitals.
- (b). The payment of 'benefits', or rebates, for professional services listed in the Medicare Benefits

Schedule (MBS). In general, the Medicare benefit is 85% of the Schedule fee, otherwise the benefits are

- i. 100% of the Schedule fee for services provided by a general practitioner to non-referred, non-admitted patients;
- ii. 100% of the Schedule fee for services provided on behalf of a general practitioner by a practice nurse or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner;
- iii. 75% of the Schedule fee for professional services rendered to a patient as part of an episode of hospital treatment (other than public patients);
- iv. 75% of the Schedule fee for professional services rendered as part of a privately insured episode of hospital-substitute treatment.

Medicare benefits are claimable only for 'clinically relevant' services rendered by an appropriate health practitioner. A 'clinically relevant' service is one which is generally accepted by the relevant profession as necessary for the appropriate treatment of the patient.

When a service is not clinically relevant, the fee and payment arrangements are a private matter between the practitioner and the patient.

Services listed in the MBS must be rendered according to the provisions of the relevant Commonwealth, State and Territory laws. For example, medical practitioners must ensure that the medicines and medical devices they use have been supplied to them in strict accordance with the provisions of the *Therapeutic Goods Act 1989*.

Where a Medicare benefit has been inappropriately paid, the Department of Human Services may request its return from the practitioner concerned.

### **G1.3 Medicare benefits and billing practices**

#### **Key information on Medicare benefits and billing practices**

The *Health Insurance Act 1973* stipulates that Medicare benefits are payable for professional services. A professional service is a clinically relevant service which is listed in the MBS. A medical service is clinically relevant if it is generally accepted in the medical profession as necessary for the appropriate treatment of the patient.

Medical practitioners are free to set their fees for their professional service. However, the amount specified in the patient's account must be the amount charged for the service specified. The fee may not include a cost of goods or services which are not part of the MBS service specified on the account.

## **Billing practices contrary to the Act**

A *non-clinically relevant service* must not be included in the charge for a Medicare item. The non-clinically relevant service must be separately listed on the account and not billed to Medicare.

Goods supplied for the patient's home use (such as wheelchairs, oxygen tanks, continence pads) must not be included in the consultation charge. Medicare benefits are limited to services which the medical practitioner provides at the time of the consultation - any other services must be separately listed on the account and must not be billed to Medicare.

Charging part of all of an episode of hospital treatment or a hospital substitute treatment to a non-admitted consultation is prohibited. This would constitute a false or misleading statement on behalf of the medical practitioner and no Medicare benefits would be payable.

An account may not be re-issued to include charges and out-of-pocket expenses excluded in the original account. The account can only be reissued to correct a genuine error.

## **Potential consequence of improperly issuing an account**

The potential consequences for improperly issuing an account are

- (a) No Medicare benefits will be paid for the service;
- (b) The medical practitioner who issued the account, or authorised its issue, may face charges under sections 128A or 128B of the *Health Insurance Act 1973*.
- (c) Medicare benefits paid as a result of a false or misleading statement will be recoverable from the doctor under section 129AC of the *Health Insurance Act 1973*.

Providers should be aware that the Department of Human Services is legally obliged to investigate doctors suspected of making false or misleading statements, and may refer them for prosecution if the evidence indicates fraudulent charging to Medicare. If Medicare benefits have been paid inappropriately or incorrectly, the Department of Human Services will take recovery action.

The Department of Human Services (DHS) has developed a [Health Practitioner Guideline for responding to a request to substantiate that a patient attended a service](#). There is also a [Health Practitioner Guideline for substantiating that a specific treatment was performed](#). These guidelines are located on the DHS website.

## G2.1 Provider eligibility for Medicare

To be eligible to provide medical service which will attract Medicare benefits, or to provide services for or on behalf of another practitioner, practitioners must meet one of the following criteria:

- (a) be a recognised specialist, consultant physician or general practitioner; or
- (b) be in an approved placement under section 3GA of the *Health Insurance Act 1973*; or
- (c) be a temporary resident doctor with an exemption under section 19AB of the *Health Insurance Act 1973*, and working in accord with that exemption.

Any practitioner who does not satisfy the requirements outlined above may still practice medicine but their services will not be eligible for Medicare benefits.

**NOTE:** New Zealand citizens entering Australia do so under a special temporary entry visa and are regarded as temporary resident doctors.

**NOTE:** It is an offence under Section 19CC of the *Health Insurance Act 1973* to provide a service without first informing a patient where a Medicare benefit is not payable for that service (i.e. the service is not listed in the MBS).

## Non-medical practitioners

To be eligible to provide services which will attract Medicare benefits under MBS items 10950-10977 and MBS items 80000-88000 and 82100-82140 and 82200-82215, allied health professionals, dentists, and dental specialists, participating midwives and participating nurse practitioners must be

- (a) registered according to State or Territory law or, absent such law, be members of a professional association with uniform national registration requirements; and
- (b) registered with the Department of Human Services to provide these services.

## G2.2 Provider Numbers

Practitioners eligible to have Medicare benefits payable for their services and/or who for Medicare purposes wish to raise referrals for specialist services and requests for pathology or diagnostic imaging services, may apply *in writing* to the Department of Human Services for a Medicare provider number for the locations where these services/referrals/requests will be provided. The form may be downloaded from [the Department of Human Services website](#).

For Medicare purposes, an account/receipt issued by a practitioner must include the practitioner's name and *either* the provider number for the location where the service was provided *or* the address where the

services were provided.

Medicare provider number information is released in accord with the secrecy provisions of the *Health Insurance Act 1973* (section 130) to authorized external organizations including private health insurers, the Department of Veterans' Affairs and the Department of Health.

When a practitioner ceases to practice at a given location they must inform Medicare promptly. Failure to do so can lead to the misdirection of Medicare cheques and Medicare information.

Practitioners at practices participating in the Practice Incentives Program (PIP) should use a provider number linked to that practice. Under PIP, only services rendered by a practitioner whose provider number is linked to the PIP will be considered for PIP payments.

### **G2.3 Locum tenens**

Where a locum tenens will be in a practice for more than two weeks *or* in a practice for less than two weeks but on a regular basis, the locum should apply for a provider number for the relevant location. If the locum will be in a practice for less than two weeks and will not be returning there, they should contact the Department of Human Services (provider liaison - 132 150) to discuss their options (for example, use one of the locum's other provider numbers).

A locum must use the provider number allocated to the location if

- (a) they are an approved general practice or specialist trainee with a provider number issued for an approved training placement; or
- (b) they are associated with an approved rural placement under Section 3GA of the *Health Insurance Act 1973*; or
- (c) they have access to Medicare benefits as a result of the issue of an exemption under section 19AB of the *Health Insurance Act 1973* (i.e. they have access to Medicare benefits at specific practice locations); or
- (d) they will be at a practice which is participating in the Practice Incentives Program; or
- (e) they are associated with a placement on the MedicarePlus for Other Medical Practitioners (OMPs) program, the After Hours OMPs program, the Rural OMPs program or Outer Metropolitan OMPs program.

### **G2.4 Overseas trained doctor**

## Ten year moratorium

Section 19AB of the *Health Insurance Act 1973* states that services provided by overseas trained doctors (including New Zealand trained doctors) and former overseas medical students trained in Australia, will not attract Medicare benefits for 10 years from *either*

- (a) their date of registration as a medical practitioner for the purposes of the *Health Insurance Act 1973*; *or*
- (b) their date of permanent residency (the reference date will vary from case to case).

## Exclusions - Practitioners who **before 1 January 1997** had

- (a) registered with a State or Territory medical board *and* retained a continuing right to remain in Australia; *or*
- (b) lodged a valid application with the Australian Medical Council (AMC) to undertake examinations whose successful completion would normally entitle the candidate to become a medical practitioner.

The Minister of Health and Ageing may grant an overseas trained doctor (OTD) or occupational trainee (OT) an exemption to the requirements of the ten year moratorium, with or without conditions. When applying for a Medicare provider number, the OTD or OT must

- (a) demonstrate that they need a provider number and that their employer supports their request; and
- (b) provide the following documentation:
  - i. Australian medical registration papers; and
  - ii. a copy of their personal details in their passport and all Australian visas and entry stamps; and
  - iii. a letter from the employer stating why the person requires a Medicare provider number and/or prescriber number is required; and
  - iv. a copy of the employment contract.

## G2.5 Contact details for the Department of Human Services

### Changes to Provider Contact Details

It is important that you contact the Department of Human Services promptly of any changes to your preferred contact details. Your preferred mailing address is used to contact you about Medicare provider matters. We require requests for changes to your preferred contact details to be made by the provider in writing to the Department of Human Services at:

GPO Box 9822

in your capital city

or

By email: [medicare prov@medicareaustralia.gov.au](mailto:medicare prov@medicareaustralia.gov.au)

You may also be able to update some provider details through HPOS  
<http://www.medicareaustralia.gov.au/hpos/index.jsp>

### **MBS Interpretations**

The day-to-day administration and payment of benefits under the Medicare arrangements is the responsibility of the Department of Human Services. Inquiries concerning matters of interpretation of MBS items should be directed to the Department of Human Services at Email:  
[askmbs@humanservices.gov.au](mailto:askmbs@humanservices.gov.au)

or by phone on 132 150

### **G3.1 Patient eligibility for Medicare**

An "eligible person" is a person who resides permanently in Australia. This includes New Zealand citizens and holders of permanent residence visas. Applicants for permanent residence may also be eligible persons, depending on circumstances. Eligible persons must enrol with Medicare before they can receive Medicare benefits.

Medicare covers services provided only in Australia. It does not refund treatment or evacuation expenses overseas.

### **G3.2 Medicare cards**

The **green** Medicare card is for people permanently in Australia. Cards may be issued for individuals or families.

The **blue** Medicare card bearing the words "INTERIM CARD" is for people who have applied for



permanent residence.

Visitors from countries with which Australia has a Reciprocal Health Care Agreement receive a card bearing the words "RECIPROCAL HEALTH CARE"

### **G3.3 Visitors to Australia and temporary residents**

Visitors and temporary residents in Australia are not eligible for Medicare and should therefore have adequate private health insurance.

### **G3.4 Reciprocal Health Care Agreements**

Australia has Reciprocal Health Care Agreements with New Zealand, Ireland, the United Kingdom, the Netherlands, Sweden, Finland, Norway, Italy, Malta, Belgium and Slovenia.

Visitors from these countries are entitled to medically necessary treatment while they are in Australia, comprising public hospital care (as public patients), Medicare benefits and drugs under the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS). Visitors must enroll with the Department of Human Services to receive benefits. A passport is sufficient for public hospital care and PBS drugs.

#### **Exceptions:**

- Visitors from Ireland and New Zealand are entitled to public hospital care and PBS drugs, and should present their passports before treatment as they are not issued with Medicare cards.
- Visitors from Italy and Malta are covered for a period of six months only.

The Agreements do not cover treatment as a private patient in a public or private hospital. People visiting Australia for the purpose of receiving treatment are not covered.

### **G4.1 General Practice**

Some MBS items may only be used by general practitioners. For MBS purposes a general practitioner is a medical practitioner who is

- (a) vocationally registered under section 3F of the *Health Insurance Act 1973* (see General Explanatory Note below); or

- (b) a Fellow of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (FRACGP), who participates in, and meets the requirements for the RACGP Quality Assurance and Continuing Medical Education Program; or
- (c) a Fellow of the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (FACRRM) who participates in, and meets the requirements for the ACRRM Quality Assurance and Continuing Medical Education Program; or
- (d) is undertaking an approved general practice placement in a training program for *either* the award of FRACGP *or* a training program recognised by the RACGP being of an equivalent standard; or
- (e) is undertaking an approved general practice placement in a training program for *either* the award of FACRRM *or* a training program recognised by ACRRM as being of an equivalent standard.

A medical practitioner seeking recognition as an FRACGP should apply to the Department of Human Services, having completed an application form available from the Department of Human Services's website. A general practice trainee should apply to General Practice Education and Training Limited (GPET) for a general practitioner trainee placement. GPET will advise the Department of Human Services when a placement is approved. General practitioner trainees need to apply for a provider number using the appropriate provider number application form available on the Department of Human Services's website.

### **Vocational recognition of general practitioners**

The only qualifications leading to vocational recognition are FRACGP and FACRRM. The criteria for recognition as a GP are:

- (a) certification by the RACGP that the practitioner
  - is a Fellow of the RACGP; and
  - practice is, or will be within 28 days, predominantly in general practice; and
  - has met the minimum requirements of the RACGP for taking part in continuing medical education and quality assurance programs.
- (b) certification by the General Practice Recognition Eligibility Committee (GPREC) that the practitioner
  - is a Fellow of the RACGP; and
  - practice is, or will be within 28, predominantly in general practice; and
  - has met minimum requirements of the RACGP for taking part in continuing medical education and quality assurance programs.

- (c) certification by ACRRM that the practitioner
- is a Fellow of ACRRM; and
  - has met the minimum requirements of the ACRRM for taking part in continuing medical education and quality assurance programs.

In assessing whether a practitioner's medical practice is predominantly in general practice, the practitioner must have at least 50% of clinical time and services claimed against Medicare. Regard will also be given as to whether the practitioner provides a comprehensive primary medical service, including treating a wide range of patients and conditions using a variety of accepted medical skills and techniques, providing services away from the practitioner's surgery on request, for example, home visits and making appropriate provision for the practitioner's patients to have access to after hours medical care.

Further information on eligibility for recognition should be directed to:

QI&CPD Program Administrator, RACGP

Tel: 1800 472 247

Email at: [qicpd@racgp.org.au](mailto:qicpd@racgp.org.au)

Secretary, General Practice Recognition Eligibility Committee:

Email at [gprec@health.gov.au](mailto:gprec@health.gov.au)

Executive Assistant, ACRRM:

Tel: (07) 3105 8200

Email at [acrrm@acrrm.org.au](mailto:acrrm@acrrm.org.au)

### ***How to apply for vocational recognition***

Medical practitioners seeking vocational recognition should apply to the Department of Human Services using the approved Application Form available on the the Department of Human Services website: [www.humanservices.gov.au](http://www.humanservices.gov.au). Applicants should forward their applications, as appropriate, to

The Secretariat

The General Practice Recognition Eligibility Committee

National Registration and Accreditation Scheme Policy Section

MDP 152

Department of Health

GPO Box 9848

CANBERRA ACT 2601

email address: gprec@health.gov.au

The Secretariat

The General Practice Recognition Appeal Committee

National Registration and Accreditation Scheme Policy Section

MDP 152

Department of Health

GPO Box 9848

CANBERRA ACT 2601

email address: gprac@health.gov.au

The relevant body will forward the application together with its certification of eligibility to the Department of Human Services CEO for processing.

Continued vocational recognition is dependent upon:

- (a) the practitioner's practice continuing to be predominantly in general practice (for medical practitioners in the Register only); and
- (b) the practitioner continuing to meet minimum requirements for participation in continuing professional development programs approved by the RACGP or the ACRRM.

Further information on continuing medical education and quality assurance requirements should be directed to the RACGP or the ACRRM depending on the college through which the practitioner is pursuing, or is intending to pursue, continuing medical education.

Medical practitioners refused certification by the RACGP, the ACRRM or GPREC may appeal in writing to The Secretariat, General Practice Recognition Appeal Committee (GPRAC), National Registration and Accreditation Scheme Policy Section, MDP 152, Department of Health, GPO Box 9848, Canberra, ACT, 2601.

***Removal of vocational recognition status***

A medical practitioner may at any time request the Department of Human Services to remove their name from the Vocational Register of General Practitioners.

Vocational recognition status can also be revoked if the RACGP, the ACRRM or GPREC certifies to the Department of Human Services that it is no longer satisfied that the practitioner should remain vocationally recognised. Appeals of the decision to revoke vocational recognition may be made in writing to GPRAC, at the above address.

A practitioner whose name has been removed from the register, or whose determination has been revoked for any reason must make a formal application to re-register, or for a new determination.

### **G5.1 Recognition as a Specialist or Consultant Physician**

A medical practitioner who:

- is registered as a specialist under State or Territory law; or
- holds a fellowship of a specified specialist College and has obtained, after successfully completing an appropriate course of study, a relevant qualification from a relevant College

and has formally applied and paid the prescribed fee, may be recognised by the Minister as a specialist or consultant physician for the purposes of the *Health Insurance Act 1973*.

A relevant specialist College may also give the Department of Human Services' Chief Executive Officer a written notice stating that a medical practitioner meets the criteria for recognition.

A medical practitioner who is training for a fellowship of a specified specialist College and is undertaking training placements in a private hospital or in general practice, may provide services which attract Medicare rebates. Specialist trainees should consult the information available at the [Department of Human Services' Medicare website](#).

Once the practitioner is recognised as a specialist or consultant physician for the purposes of the *Health Insurance Act 1973*, Medicare benefits will be payable at the appropriate higher rate for services rendered in the relevant speciality, provided the patient has been appropriately referred to them.

Further information about applying for recognition is available at the [Department of Human Services' Medicare website](#).

The Department of Human Services (DHS) has developed an [Health Practitioner Guideline](#) to

[substantiate that a valid referral existed \(specialist or consultant physician\)](#) which is located on the DHS website.

## **G5.2 Emergency Medicine**

A practitioner will be acting as an emergency medicine specialist when treating a patient within 30 minutes of the patient's presentation, and that patient is

- (a) at risk of serious morbidity or mortality requiring urgent assessment and resuscitation; or
- (b) suffering from suspected acute organ or system failure; or
- (c) suffering from an illness or injury where the viability or function of a body part or organ is acutely threatened; or
- (d) suffering from a drug overdose, toxic substance or toxin effect; or
- (e) experiencing severe psychiatric disturbance whereby the health of the patient or other people is at immediate risk; or
- (f) suffering acute severe pain where the viability or function of a body part or organ is suspected to be acutely threatened; or
- (g) suffering acute significant haemorrhage requiring urgent assessment and treatment; and
- (h) treated in, or via, a bona fide emergency department in a hospital.

Benefits are not payable where such services are rendered in the accident and emergency departments or outpatient departments of public hospitals.

## **G6.1 Referral Of Patients To Specialists Or Consultant Physicians**

For certain services provided by specialists and consultant physicians, the Medicare benefit payable is dependent on acceptable evidence that the service has been provided following referral from another practitioner.

A reference to a referral in this Section does not refer to written requests made for pathology services or diagnostic imaging services.

### **What is a Referral?**

A "referral" is a request to a specialist or a consultant physician for investigation, opinion, treatment and/or management of a condition or problem of a patient or for the performance of a specific

examination(s) or test(s).

Subject to the exceptions in the paragraph below, for a valid "referral" to take place

- (i) the referring practitioner must have undertaken a professional attendance with the patient and turned his or her mind to the patient's need for referral and have communicated relevant information about the patient to the specialist or consultant physician (this need not mean an attendance on the occasion of the referral);
- (ii) the instrument of referral must be in writing as a letter or note to a specialist or to a consultant physician and must be signed and dated by the referring practitioner; and
- (iii) the specialist or consultant physician to whom the patient is referred must have received the instrument of referral on or prior to the occasion of the professional service to which the referral relates.

The exceptions to the requirements in paragraph above are that

(a) sub-paragraphs (i), (ii) and (iii) do not apply to

- a pre-anaesthesia consultation by a specialist anaesthetist (items 16710-17625);

(b) subparagraphs (ii) and (iii) do not apply to

- a referral generated during an episode of hospital treatment, for a service provided or arranged by that hospital, where the hospital records provide evidence of a referral (including the referring practitioner's signature); or
- an emergency where the referring practitioner or the specialist or the consultant physician was of the opinion that the service be rendered as quickly as possible; and

(c) subparagraph (iii) does not apply to instances where a written referral was completed by a referring practitioner but was lost, stolen or destroyed.

### **Examination by Specialist Anaesthetists**

A referral is not required in the case of pre-anaesthesia consultation items 17610-17625. However, for benefits to be payable at the specialist rate for consultations, other than pre-anaesthesia consultations by specialist anaesthetists (items 17640 -17655) a referral is required.

### **Who can Refer?**

The general practitioner is regarded as the primary source of referrals. Cross-referrals between specialists and/or consultant physicians should usually occur in consultation with the patient's general practitioner.

### **Referrals by Dentists or Optometrists or Participating Midwives or Participating Nurse Practitioners**

For Medicare benefit purposes, a referral may be made to

- (i) a recognised specialist:
  - (a) by a registered dental practitioner, where the referral arises from a dental service; or
  - (b) by a registered optometrist where the specialist is an ophthalmologist; or
  - (c) by a participating midwife where the specialist is an obstetrician or a paediatrician, as clinical needs dictate. A referral given by a participating midwife is valid until 12 months after the first service given in accordance with the referral and for 1 pregnancy only or
  - (d) by a participating nurse practitioner to specialists and consultant physicians. A referral given by a participating nurse practitioner is valid until 12 months after the first service given in accordance with the referral.
- (ii) a consultant physician, by an approved dental practitioner (oral surgeon), where the referral arises out of a dental service.

In any other circumstances (i.e. a referral to a consultant physician by a dentist, other than an approved oral surgeon, or an optometrist, or a referral by an optometrist to a specialist other than a specialist ophthalmologist), it is not a valid referral. Any resulting consultant physician or specialist attendances will attract Medicare benefits at unreferred rates.

Registered dentists and registered optometrists may refer themselves to specialists in accordance with the criteria above, and Medicare benefits are payable at the levels which apply to their referred patients.

## **Billing**

### ***Routine Referrals***

In addition to providing the usual information required to be shown on accounts, receipts or assignment forms, specialists and consultant physicians must provide the following details (unless there are special circumstances as indicated in paragraph below):-

- name and either practice address or provider number of the referring practitioner;
- date of referral; and
- period of referral (when other than for 12 months) expressed in months, eg "3", "6" or "18" months, or "indefinitely" should be shown.

### ***Special Circumstances***

- (i) *Lost, stolen or destroyed referrals.*



If a referral has been made but the letter or note of referral has been lost, stolen or destroyed, benefits will be payable at the referred rate if the account, receipt or the assignment form shows the name of the referring medical practitioner, the practice address or provider number of the referring practitioner (if either of these are known to the consultant physician or specialist) and the words 'Lost referral'. This provision only applies to the initial attendance. For subsequent attendances to attract Medicare benefits at the referred rate a duplicate or replacement letter of referral must be obtained by the specialist or the consultant physician.

#### *(ii) Emergencies*

If the referral occurred in an emergency, benefit will be payable at the referred rate if the account, receipt or assignment form is endorsed 'Emergency referral'. This provision only applies to the initial attendance. For subsequent attendances to attract Medicare benefits at the referred rate the specialist/consultant physician must obtain a letter of referral.

#### *(iii) Hospital referrals.*

Private Patients - Where a referral is generated during an episode of hospital treatment for a service provided or arranged by that hospital, benefits will be payable at the referred rate if the account, receipt or assignment form is endorsed 'Referral within (name of hospital)' and the patient's hospital records show evidence of the referral (including the referring practitioner's signature). However, in other instances where a medical practitioner within a hospital is involved in referring a patient (e.g. to a specialist or a consultant physician in private rooms) the normal referral arrangements apply, including the requirement for a referral letter or note and its retention by the specialist or the consultant physician billing for the service.

#### ***PublicHospitalPatients***

State and Territory Governments are responsible for the provision of public hospital services to eligible persons in accordance with the National Healthcare Agreement.

#### ***Bulk Billing***

Bulk billing assignment forms should show the same information as detailed above. However, faster processing of the claim will be facilitated where the provider number (rather than the practice address) of the referring practitioner is shown.

#### **Period for which Referral is Valid**

The referral is valid for the period specified in the referral which is taken to commence on the date of the specialist's or consultant physician's first service covered by that referral.

#### ***Specialist Referrals***

Where a referral originates from a specialist or a consultant physician, the referral is valid for 3 months,

except where the referred patient is an admitted patient. For admitted patients, the referral is valid for 3 months or the duration of the admission whichever is the longer.

As it is expected that the patient's general practitioner will be kept informed of the patient's progress, a referral from a specialist or a consultant physician must include the name of the patient's general practitioners and/or practice. Where a patient is unable or unwilling to nominate a general practitioner or practice this must be stated in the referral.

### ***Referrals by other Practitioners***

Where the referral originates from a practitioner other than those listed in *Specialist Referrals*, the referral is valid for a period of 12 months, unless the referring practitioner indicates that the referral is for a period more or less than 12 months (eg. 3, 6 or 18 months or valid indefinitely). Referrals for longer than 12 months should only be used where the patient's clinical condition requires continuing care and management of a specialist or a consultant physician for a specific condition or specific conditions.

### **Definition of a Single Course of Treatment**

A single course of treatment involves an initial attendance by a specialist or consultant physician and the continuing management/treatment up to the stage where the patient is referred back to the care of the referring practitioner. It also includes any subsequent review of the patient's condition by the specialist or the consultant physician that may be necessary. Such a review may be initiated by either the referring practitioner or the specialist/consultant physician.

The presentation of an unrelated illness, requiring the referral of the patient to the specialist's or the consultant physician's care would initiate a new course of treatment in which case a new referral would be required.

The receipt by a specialist or consultant physician of a new referral following the expiration of a previous referral for the same condition(s) does not necessarily indicate the commencement of a new course of treatment involving the itemisation of an initial consultation. In the continuing management/treatment situation the new referral is to facilitate the payment of benefits at the specialist or the consultant physician referred rates rather than the unreferral rates.

However, where the referring practitioner:-

- (a) deems it necessary for the patient's condition to be reviewed; and
- (b) the patient is seen by the specialist or the consultant physician outside the currency of the last referral; and
- (c) the patient was last seen by the specialist or the consultant physician more than 9 months earlier

the attendance following the new referral initiates a new course of treatment for which Medicare benefit

would be payable at the initial consultation rates.

### **Retention of Referral Letters**

The prima facie evidence that a valid referral exists is the provision of the referral particulars on the specialist's or the consultant physician's account.

A specialist or a consultant physician is required to retain the instrument of referral (and a hospital is required to retain the patient's hospital records which show evidence of a referral) for 18 months from the date the service was rendered.

A specialist or a consultant physician is required, if requested by the Department of Human Services CEO, to produce to a medical practitioner who is an employee of the Department of Human Services, the instrument of referral within seven days after the request is received. Where the referral originates in an emergency situation or in a hospital, the specialist or consultant physician is required to produce such information as is in his or her possession or control relating to whether the patient was so treated.

### **Attendance for Issuing of a Referral**

Medicare benefit is attracted for an attendance on a patient even where the attendance is solely for the purpose of issuing a referral letter or note. However, if a medical practitioner issues a referral without an attendance on the patient, no benefit is payable for any charge raised for issuing the referral.

### **Locumtenens Arrangements**

It should be noted that where a non-specialist medical practitioner acts as a locumtenens for a specialist or consultant physician, or where a specialist acts as a locumtenens for a consultant physician, Medicare benefit is only payable at the level appropriate for the particular locumtenens, eg, general practitioner level for a general practitioner locumtenens and specialist level for a referred service rendered by a specialist locum tenens.

Medicare benefits are not payable where a practitioner is not eligible to provide services attracting Medicare benefits acts as a locum-tenens for any practitioner who is eligible to provide services attracting Medicare benefits.

Fresh referrals are not required for locumtenens acting according to accepted medical practice for the principal of a practice ie referrals to the latter are accepted as applying to the former and benefit is not payable at the initial attendance rate for an attendance by a locumtenens if the principal has already performed an initial attendance in respect of the particular instrument of referral.

### **Self Referral**

Medical practitioners may refer themselves to consultant physicians and specialists and Medicare benefits are payable at referred rates.

## **G7.1 Billing procedures**

The Department of Human Services website contains information on Medicare billing and claiming options. Please visit the [Department of Human Services](#) website for further information.

### Bulk billing

Under the *Health Insurance Act 1973*, a bulk billing facility for professional services is available to all persons in Australia who are eligible for a benefit under the Medicare program. If a practitioner bulk bills for a service the practitioner undertakes to accept the relevant Medicare benefit as full payment for the service. Additional charges for that service cannot be raised. This includes but is not limited to:

- any consumables that would be reasonably necessary to perform the service, including bandages and/or dressings;
- record keeping fees;
- a booking fee to be paid before each service, or;
- an annual administration or registration fee.

Where the patient is bulk billed, an additional charge can **only** be raised against the patient by the practitioner where the patient is provided with a vaccine or vaccines from the practitioner's own supply held on the practitioner's premises. This exemption only applies to general practitioners and other non-specialist practitioners in association with attendance items 3 to 96 and 5000 to 5267 (inclusive) and only relates to vaccines that are not available to the patient free of charge through Commonwealth or State funding arrangements or available through the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme. The additional charge must only be to cover the supply of the vaccine.

Where a practitioner provides a number of services on the one occasion and claims multiple Medicare items, the practitioner can choose to bulk bill some or all of those services. Where some but not all of the services are bulk billed a fee may be privately charged for the other service (or services) in excess of the Medicare rebate provided that that fee is only in relation to that service (or services).

It should be noted that, where a service is not bulk billed, a practitioner may privately raise an additional charge against a patient, such as for a consumable. An additional charge can also be raised where a practitioner does not bulk bill a patient but instead charges a fee that is equal to the rebate for the Medicare service. For example, where a practitioner provides a professional service to which item 23 relates the practitioner could, in place of bulk billing the patient, charge the rebate for the service and then also raise an additional charge (such as for a consumable).

## **G8.1 Provision for review of individual health professionals**

The Professional Services Review (PSR) reviews and investigates service provision by health practitioners to determine if they have engaged in inappropriate practice when rendering or initiating Medicare services, or when prescribing or dispensing under the PBS.

Section 82 of the *Health Insurance Act 1973* defines inappropriate practice as conduct that is such that a PSR Committee could reasonably conclude that it would be unacceptable to the general body of the members of the profession in which the practitioner was practicing when they rendered or initiated the services under review. It is also an offence under Section 82 for a person or officer of a body corporate to knowingly, recklessly or negligently cause or permit a practitioner employed by the person to engage in such conduct.

The Department of Human Services monitors health practitioners' claiming patterns. Where the Department of Human Services detects an anomaly, it may request the Director of PSR to review the practitioner's service provision. On receiving the request, the Director must decide whether to conduct a review and in which manner the review will be conducted. The Director is authorized to require that documents and information be provided.

Following a review, the Director must:

decide to take no further action; or

enter into an agreement with the person under review (which must then be ratified by an independent Determining Authority); or

refer the matter to a PSR Committee.

A PSR Committee normally comprises three medically qualified members, two of whom must be members of the same profession as the practitioner under review. However, up to two additional Committee members may be appointed to provide wider range of clinical expertise.

The Committee is authorized to:

investigate any aspect of the provision of the referred services, and without being limited by the reasons given in the review request or by a Director's report following the review;

hold hearings and require the person under review to attend and give evidence;

require the production of documents (including clinical notes).

The methods available to a PSR Committee to investigate and quantify inappropriate practice are specified in legislation:

**(a) Patterns of Services** - The *Health Insurance (Professional Services Review) Regulations 1999* specify that when a general practitioner or other medical practitioner reaches or exceeds 80 or more attendances on each of 20 or more days in a 12-month period, they are deemed to have practiced inappropriately.

A professional attendance means a service of a kind mentioned in group A1, A2, A5, A6, A7, A9, A11, A13, A14, A15, A16, A17, A18, A19, A20, A21, A22 or A23 of Part 3 of the General Medical Services Table.

If the practitioner can satisfy the PSR Committee that their pattern of service was as a result of exceptional circumstances, the quantum of inappropriate practice is reduced accordingly. Exceptional circumstances include, but are not limited to, those set out in the *Regulations*. These include:

an unusual occurrence;

the absence of other medical services for the practitioner's patients (having regard to the practice location); and

the characteristics of the patients.

**(b) Sampling** - A PSR Committee may use statistically valid methods to sample the clinical or practice records.

**(c) Generic findings** - If a PSR Committee cannot use patterns of service or sampling (for example, there are insufficient medical records), it can make a 'generic' finding of inappropriate practice.

### **Additional Information**

A PSR Committee may not make a finding of inappropriate practice unless it has given the person under review notice of its intention to review them, the reasons for its findings, and an opportunity to respond. In reaching their decision, a PSR Committee is required to consider whether or not the practitioner has kept adequate and contemporaneous patient records (See general explanatory note G15.1 for more information on adequate and contemporaneous patient records).

The practitioner under review is permitted to make submissions to the PSR Committee before key decisions or a final report is made.

If a PSR Committee finds that the person under review has engaged in inappropriate practice, the findings

will be reported to the Determining Authority to decide what action should be taken:

- (i) a reprimand;
- (ii) counselling;
- (iii) repayment of Medicare benefits; and/or
- (iv) complete or partial disqualification from Medicare benefit arrangements for up to three years.

Further information is available from the PSR website - [www.psr.gov.au](http://www.psr.gov.au)

## **G8.2 Medicare Participation Review Committee**

The Medicare Participation Review Committee determines what administrative action should be taken against a practitioner who:

- (a) has been successfully prosecuted for relevant criminal offences;
- (b) has breached an Approved Pathology Practitioner undertaking;
- (c) has engaged in prohibited diagnostic imaging practices; or
- (d) has been found to have engaged in inappropriate practice under the Professional Services Review scheme and has received Final Determinations on two (or more) occasions.

The Committee can take no further action, counsel or reprimand the practitioner, or determine that the practitioner be disqualified from Medicare for a particular period or in relation to particular services for up to five years.

Medicare benefits are not payable in respect of services rendered by a practitioner who has been fully disqualified, or partly disqualified in relation to relevant services under the *Health Insurance Act 1973* (Section 19B applies).

## **G8.3 Referral of professional issues to regulatory and other bodies**

The *Health Insurance Act 1973* provides for the following referral, to an appropriate regulatory body:

1. a significant threat to a person's life or health, when caused or is being caused or is likely to be caused by the conduct of the practitioner under review; or
2. a statement of concerns of non-compliance by a practitioner with 'professional standards'.

## **G8.4 Comprehensive Management Framework for the MBS**

The Government announced the Comprehensive Management Framework for the MBS in the 2011-12 Budget to improve MBS management and governance into the future. As part of this framework, the Medical Services Advisory Committee (MSAC) Terms of Reference and membership have been expanded to provide the Government with independent expert advice on all new proposed services to be funded through the MBS, as well as on all proposed amendments to existing MBS items. Processes developed under the previously funded MBS Quality Framework are now being integrated with MSAC processes under the Comprehensive Management Framework for the MBS.

## **G8.5 Medical Services Advisory Committee**

The Medical Services Advisory Committee (MSAC) advises the Minister on the strength of evidence relating to the safety, effectiveness and cost effectiveness of new and emerging medical services and technologies and under what circumstances public funding, including listing on the MBS, should be supported.

MSAC members are appointed by the Minister and include specialist practitioners, general practitioners, health economists, a health consumer representative, health planning and administration experts and epidemiologists.

For more information on the MSAC refer to their website - [www.msac.gov.au](http://www.msac.gov.au) or email on [msac.secretariat@health.gov.au](mailto:msac.secretariat@health.gov.au) or by phoning the MSAC secretariat on (02) 6289 7550.

## **G8.6 Pathology Services Table Committee**

This Pathology Services Table Committee comprises six representatives from the interested professions and six from the Australian Government. Its primary role is to advise the Minister on the need for changes to the structure and content of the Pathology Services Table (except new medical services and technologies) including the level of fees.

## **G8.7 Medicare Claims Review Panel**

There are MBS items which make the payment of Medicare benefits dependent on a 'demonstrated' clinical need. Services requiring prior approval are those covered by items 11222, 11225, 12207, 12215, 12217, 21965, 21997, 30214, 35534, 32501, 42783, 42786, 42789, 42792, 45019, 45020, 45051, 45528, 45557, 45558, 45559, 45585, 45586, 45588, 45639.



Claims for benefits for these services should be lodged with the Department of Human Services for referral to the National Office of the Department of Human Services for assessment by the Medicare Claims Review Panel (MCRP) and must be accompanied by sufficient clinical and/or photographic evidence to enable the Department of Human Services to determine the eligibility of the service for the payment of benefits.

Practitioners may also apply to the Department of Human Services for prospective approval for proposed surgery.

Applications for approval should be addressed to:

**The MCRP Officer**

**PO Box 9822**

**SYDNEY NSW 2001**

### **G9.1 Penalties and Liabilities**

Penalties of up to \$10,000 or imprisonment for up to five years, or both, may be imposed on any person who makes a statement (oral or written) or who issues or presents a document that is false or misleading in a material particular and which is capable of being used with a claim for benefits. In addition, any practitioner who is found guilty of such offences by a court shall be subject to examination by a Medicare Participation Review Committee and may be counselled or reprimanded or may have services wholly or partially disqualified from the Medicare benefit arrangements.

A penalty of up to \$1,000 or imprisonment for up to three months, or both, may be imposed on any person who obtains a patient's signature on a directbilling form without the obligatory details having been entered on the form before the person signs, or who fails to cause a patient to be given a copy of the completed form.

### **G10.1 Schedule fees and Medicare benefits**

Medicare benefits are based on fees determined for each medical service. The fee is referred to in these notes as the "Schedule fee". The fee for any item listed in the MBS is that which is regarded as being reasonable on average for that service having regard to usual and reasonable variations in the time involved in performing the service on different occasions and to reasonable ranges of complexity and technical difficulty encountered.

In some cases two levels of fees are applied to the same service in General Medical Services, with each level of fee being allocated a separate item number. The item identified by the letter "S" applies in the case where the procedure has been rendered by a recognised specialist in the practice of his or her speciality and the patient has been referred. The item identified by the letter "G" applies in any other circumstances.

Schedule fees are usually adjusted on an annual basis except for Pathology, Diagnostic Imaging and certain other items.

The Schedule fee and Medicare benefit levels for the medical services contained in the MBS are located with the item descriptions. Where appropriate, the calculated benefit has been rounded to the nearest higher 5 cents. However, in no circumstances will the Medicare benefit payable exceed the fee actually charged.

There are presently three levels of Medicare benefit payable:

(a) **75% of the Schedule fee:**

i. for professional services rendered to a patient as part of an episode of hospital treatment (other than public patients). Medical practitioners must indicate on their accounts if a medical service is rendered in these circumstances by placing an asterisk '\*' directly after an item number where used; or a description of the professional service, preceded by the word 'patient';

ii. for professional services rendered as part of an episode of hospital-substitute treatment, and the patient who receives the treatment chooses to receive a benefit from a private health insurer. Medical practitioners must indicate on their accounts if a medical service is rendered in these circumstances by placing the words 'hospital-substitute treatment' directly after an item number where used; or a description of the professional service, preceded by the words 'hospital-substitute treatment'.

(b) **100% of the Schedule fee** for non-referred attendances by general practitioners to non-admitted patients and services provided by a practice nurse or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioner on behalf of a general practitioner.

(c) **85% of the Schedule fee**, or the Schedule fee less \$79.50 (indexed annually in November), whichever is the greater, for all other professional services.

Public hospital services are to be provided free of charge to eligible persons who choose to be treated as public patients in accordance with the National Healthcare Agreement.

A medical service rendered to a patient on the day of admission to, or day of discharge from hospital, *but prior to admission or subsequent to discharge*, will attract benefits at the 85% or 100% level, not 75%. This also applies to a pathology service rendered to a patient prior to admission. Attendances on patients at a hospital (other than patients covered by paragraph (i) above) attract benefits at the 85% level.

The 75% benefit level applies even though a portion of the service (eg. aftercare) may be rendered outside the hospital. With regard to obstetric items, benefits would be attracted at the 75% level where the confinement takes place in hospital.

Pathology tests performed after discharge from hospital on bodily specimens taken during hospitalisation also attract the 75% level of benefits.

It should be noted that private health insurers can cover the "patient gap" (that is, the difference between the Medicare rebate and the Schedule fee) for services attracting benefits at the 75% level. Patient's may insure with private health insurers for the gap between the 75% Medicare benefits and the Schedule fee or for amounts in excess of the Schedule fee where the doctor has an arrangement with their health insurer.

### **G10.2 Medicare safety nets**

The Medicare Safety Nets provide families and singles with an additional rebate for out-of-hospital Medicare services, once annual thresholds are reached. There are two safety nets: the original Medicare safety net and the extended Medicare safety net.

#### **Original Medicare Safety Net:**

Under the original Medicare safety net, the Medicare benefit for out-of-hospital services is increased to 100% of the Schedule Fee (up from 85%) once an annual threshold in gap costs is reached. Gap costs refer to the difference between the Medicare benefit (85%) and the Schedule Fee. The threshold from 1 January 2016 is \$447.40. This threshold applies to all Medicare-eligible singles and families.

#### **Extended Medicare Safety Net:**

Under the extended Medicare safety net (EMSN), once an annual threshold in out-of-pocket costs for out-of-hospital Medicare services is reached, Medicare will pay for 80% of any future out-of-pocket costs for out-of-hospital Medicare services for the remainder of the calendar year. However, where the item has an EMSN benefit cap, there is a maximum limit on the EMSN benefit that will be paid for that item. Further explanation about EMSN benefit caps is provided below. Out-of-pocket costs refer to the difference between the Medicare benefit and the fee charged by the practitioner.

In 2016, the threshold for singles and families that hold Commonwealth concession card, families that received Family Tax Benefit Part (A) (FTB(A)) and families that qualify for notional FTB( A) is \$647.90. The threshold for all other singles and families in 2016 is \$2,030.

The thresholds for both safety nets are usually indexed on 1 January each year.

Individuals are automatically registered with the Department of Human Services for the safety nets; however couples and families are required to register in order to be recognised as a family for the purposes on the safety nets. In most cases, registered families have their expenses combined to reach the safety net thresholds. This may help to qualify for safety net benefits more quickly. Registration forms can be obtained from the Department of Human Services offices, or completed online at <http://www.humanservices.gov.au/customer/services/medicare/medicare-safety-net>.

#### EMSN Benefit Caps:

The EMSN benefit cap is the maximum EMSN benefit payable for that item and is paid in addition to the standard Medicare rebate. Where there is an EMSN benefit cap in place for the item, the amount of the EMSN cap is displayed in the item descriptor.

Once the EMSN threshold is reached, each time the item is claimed the patient is eligible to receive up to the EMSN benefit cap. As with the safety nets, the EMSN benefit cap only applies to out-of-hospital services.

Where the item has an EMSN benefit cap, the EMSN benefit is calculated as 80% of the out-of-pocket cost for the service. If the calculated EMSN benefit is less than the EMSN benefit cap; then calculated EMSN rebate is paid. If the calculated EMSN benefit is greater than the EMSN benefit cap; the EMSN benefit cap is paid.

For example: Item A has a Schedule fee of \$100, the out-of-hospital benefit is \$85 (85% of the Schedule fee). The EMSN benefit cap is \$30. Assuming that the patient has reached the EMSN threshold:

o If the fee charged by the doctor for Item A is \$125, the standard Medicare rebate is \$85, with an out-of-pocket cost of \$40. The EMSN benefit is calculated as  $\$40 \times 80\% = \$32$ . However, as the EMSN benefit cap is \$30, only \$30 will be paid.

o If the fee charged by the doctor for Item A is \$110, the standard Medicare rebate is \$85, with an out-of-pocket cost of \$25. The EMSN benefit is calculated as  $\$25 \times 80\% = \$20$ . As this is less than the EMSN benefit cap, the full \$20 is paid.

### **G11.1 Services not listed in the MBS**

Benefits are not generally payable for services not listed in the MBS. However, there are some procedural services which are not specifically listed because they are regarded as forming part of a consultation or else attract benefits on an attendance basis. For example, intramuscular injections, aspiration needle biopsy, treatment of sebhorreic keratoses and less than 10 solar keratoses by ablative techniques and closed reduction of the toe (other than the great toe).

Enquiries about services not listed or on matters of interpretation should be directed to the Department of Human Services on 132 150.

### **G11.2 Ministerial Determinations**

Section 3C of the *Health Insurance Act 1973* empowers the Minister to determine an item and Schedule fee (for the purposes of the Medicare benefits arrangements) for a service not included in the health insurance legislation. This provision may be used to facilitate payment of benefits for new developed procedures or techniques where close monitoring is desirable. Services which have received section 3C approval are located in their relevant Groups in the MBS with the notation "**(Ministerial Determination)**".

### **G12.1 Professional services**

Professional services which attract Medicare benefits include medical services rendered by or "on behalf of" a medical practitioner. The latter include services where a part of the service is performed by a technician employed by or, in accordance with accepted medical practice, acting under the supervision of the medical practitioner.

The *Health Insurance Regulations 1975* specify that the following medical services will attract benefits only if they have been personally performed by a medical practitioner on not more than one patient on the one occasion (i.e. two or more patients cannot be attended simultaneously, although patients may be seen consecutively), unless a group session is involved (i.e. Items 170172). The requirement of "personal performance" is met whether or not assistance is provided, according to accepted medical standards:-

- (a) All Category 1 (Professional Attendances) items (except 170172, 342-346);
- (b) Each of the following items in Group D1 (Miscellaneous Diagnostic):- 11012, 11015, 11018, 11021, 11212, 11304, 11500, 11600, 11627, 11701, 11712, 11724, 11921, 12000, 12003;
- (c) All Group T1 (Miscellaneous Therapeutic) items (except 13020, 13025, 13200-13206, 13212-13221, 13703, 13706, 13709, 13750-13760, 13915-13948, 14050, 14053, 14218, 14221 and 14224);
- (d) Item 15600 in Group T2 (Radiation Oncology);

- (e) All Group T3 (Therapeutic Nuclear Medicine) items;
- (f) All Group T4 (Obstetrics) items (except 16400 and 16514);
- (g) All Group T6 (Anaesthetics) items;
- (h) All Group T7 (Regional or Field Nerve Block) items;
- (i) All Group T8 (Operations) items;
- (j) All Group T9 (Assistance at Operations) items;
- (k) All Group T10 (Relative Value Guide for Anaesthetics) items.

For the group psychotherapy and family group therapy services covered by Items 170, 171, 172, 342, 344 and 346, benefits are payable only if the services have been conducted personally by the medical practitioner.

Medicare benefits are not payable for these group items or any of the items listed in (a) (k) above when the service is rendered by a medical practitioner employed by the proprietor of a hospital (not being a private hospital), except where the practitioner is exercising their right of private practice, or is performing a medical service outside the hospital. For example, benefits are not paid when a hospital intern or registrar performs a service at the request of a staff specialist or visiting medical officer.

Medicare benefits are only payable for items 12306 - 12323 when the service is performed by a specialist or consultant physician in the practice of his or her specialty where the patient is referred by another medical practitioner.

### **G12.2 Services rendered on behalf of medical practitioners**

Medical services in Categories 2 and 3 not included in G.12.1 and Category 5 (Diagnostic Imaging) services continue to attract Medicare benefits if the service is rendered by:

- (a) the medical practitioner in whose name the service is being claimed;
- (b) a person, other than a medical practitioner, who is employed by a medical practitioner or, in accordance with accepted medical practice, acts under the supervision of a medical practitioner.

See Category 6 Notes for Guidance for arrangements relating to Pathology services.

So that a service rendered by an employee or under the supervision of a medical practitioner may attract a Medicare rebate, the service must be billed in the name of the practitioner who must accept full

responsibility for the service. the Department of Human Services must be satisfied with the employment and supervision arrangements. While the supervising medical practitioner need not be present for the entire service, they must have a direct involvement in at least part of the service. Although the supervision requirements will vary according to the service in question, they will, as a general rule, be satisfied where the medical practitioner has:-

- (a) established consistent quality assurance procedures for the data acquisition; and
- (b) personally analysed the data and written the report.

Benefits are not payable for these services when a medical practitioner refers patients to selfemployed medical or paramedical personnel, such as radiographers and audiologists, who either bill the patient or the practitioner requesting the service.

### **G12.3 Mass immunisation**

Medicare benefits are payable for a professional attendance that includes an immunisation, provided that the actual administration of the vaccine is not specifically funded through any other Commonwealth or State Government program, nor through an international or private organisation.

The location of the service, or advertising of it, or the number of patients presenting together for it, normally do not indicate a mass immunisation.

### **G13.1 Services which do not attract Medicare benefits**

#### **Services not attracting benefits**

- (a) telephone consultations;
- (b) issue of repeat prescriptions when the patient does not attend the surgery in person;
- (c) group attendances (unless otherwise specified in the item, such as items 170, 171, 172, 342, 344 and 346);
- (d) non-therapeutic cosmetic surgery;
- (e) euthanasia and any service directly related to the procedure. However, services rendered for counselling/assessment about euthanasia will attract benefits.

**Medicare benefits are not payable where the medical expenses for the service**

- (a) are paid/payable to a public hospital;
- (b) are for a compensable injury or illness for which the patient's insurer or compensation agency has accepted liability. (Please note that if the medical expenses relate to a compensable injury/illness for which the insurer/compensation agency is disputing liability, then Medicare benefits are payable until the liability is accepted.);
- (c) are for a medical examination for the purposes of life insurance, superannuation, a provident account scheme, or admission to membership of a friendly society;
- (d) are incurred in mass immunisation (see General Explanatory Note 12.3 for further explanation).

### **Unless the Minister otherwise directs**

Medicare benefits are not payable where:

- (a) the service is rendered by or on behalf of, or under an arrangement with the Australian Government, a State or Territory, a local government body or an authority established under Commonwealth, State or Territory law;
- (b) the medical expenses are incurred by the employer of the person to whom the service is rendered;
- (c) the person to whom the service is rendered is employed in an industrial undertaking and that service is rendered for the purposes related to the operation of the undertaking; or
- (d) the service is a health screening service.
- (e) the service is a pre-employment screening service

**Current regulations preclude the payment of Medicare benefits** for professional services rendered in relation to or in association with:

- (a) chelation therapy (that is, the intravenous administration of ethylenediamine tetra-acetic acid or any of its salts) other than for the treatment of heavy-metal poisoning;
- (b) the injection of human chorionic gonadotrophin in the management of obesity;
- (c) the use of hyperbaric oxygen therapy in the treatment of multiple sclerosis;
- (d) the removal of tattoos;
- (e) the transplantation of a thoracic or abdominal organ, other than a kidney, or of a part of an organ of that kind; or the transplantation of a kidney in conjunction with the transplantation of a thoracic or other abdominal organ, or part of an organ of that kind;



- (f) the removal from a cadaver of kidneys for transplantation;
- (g) the administration of microwave (UHF radio wave) cancer therapy, including the intravenous injection of drugs used in the therapy.

### **Pain pumps for post-operative pain management**

The cannulation and/or catheterisation of surgical sites associated with pain pumps for post-operative pain management cannot be billed under any MBS item.

The filling or re-filling of drug reservoirs of ambulatory pain pumps for post-operative pain management cannot be billed under any MBS items.

### **Non Medicare Services**

No MBS item applies to a service mentioned in the item if the service is provided to a patient at the same time, or in connection with, an injection of blood or ablood product that is autologous.

An item in the range 1 to 10943 does not apply to the service described in that item if the service is provided at the same time as, or in connection with, any of the services specified below:

- (a) endoluminal gastroplication, for the treatment of gastro-oesophageal reflux disease;
- (b) gamma knife surgery;
- (c) intradiscal electro thermal arthroplasty;
- (d) intravascular ultrasound (except where used in conjunction with intravascular brachytherapy);
- (e) intro-articular viscosupplementation, for the treatment of osteoarthritis of the knee;
- (f) low intensity ultrasound treatment, for the acceleration of bone fracture healing, using a bone growth stimulator;
- (g) lung volume reduction surgery, for advanced emphysema;
- (h) photodynamic therapy, for skin and mucosal cancer;
- (i) placement of artificial bowel sphincters, in the management of faecal incontinence;
- (j) selective internal radiation therapy for any condition other than hepatic metastases that are secondary to colorectal cancer;

- (k) specific mass measurement of bone alkaline phosphatase;
- (l) transmyocardial laser revascularisation;
- (m) vertebral axial decompression therapy, for chronic back pain.
- (n) autologous chondrocyte implantation and matrix-induced autologous chondrocyte implantation.
- (o) vertebroplasty

## **Health Screening Services**

Unless the Minister otherwise directs Medicare benefits are not payable for health screening services. A health screening service is defined as a medical examination or test that is not reasonably required for the management of the medical condition of the patient. Services covered by this proscription include such items as:

- (a) multiphasic health screening;
- (b) mammography screening (except as provided for in Items 59300/59303);
- (c) testing of fitness to undergo physical training program, vocational activities or weight reduction programs;
- (d) compulsory examinations and tests to obtain a flying, commercial driving or other licence;
- (e) entrance to schools and other educational facilities;
- (f) for the purposes of legal proceedings;
- (g) compulsory examinations for admission to aged persons' accommodation and pathology services associated with clinical ecology.

The Minister has directed that Medicare benefits be paid for the following categories of health screening:

- (a) a medical examination or test on a symptomless patient by that patient's own medical practitioner in the course of normal medical practice, to ensure the patient receives any medical advice or treatment necessary to maintain their state of health. Benefits would be payable for the attendance and tests which are considered reasonably necessary according to patients individual circumstances (such as age, physical condition, past personal and family history). For example, a Papanicolaou test in a person (see General Explanatory note 12.3 for more information), blood lipid estimation where a person has a family history of lipid disorder. However, such routine check-up should not necessarily be accompanied by an extensive battery of diagnostic investigations;
- (b) a pathology service requested by the National Heart Foundation of Australia, Risk Evaluation Service;

- (c) age or health related medical examinations to obtain or renew a licence to drive a private motor vehicle;
- (d) a medical examination of, and/or blood collection from persons occupationally exposed to sexual transmission of disease, in line with conditions determined by the relevant State or Territory health authority, (one examination or collection per person per week). Benefits are not paid for pathology tests resulting from the examination or collection;
- (e) a medical examination for a person as a prerequisite of that person becoming eligible to foster a child or children;
- (f) a medical examination being a requisite for Social Security benefits or allowances;
- (g) a medical or optometrical examination provided to a person who is an unemployed person (as defined by the Social Security Act 1991), as the request of a prospective employer.

The National Policy on screening for the Prevention of Cervical Cancer (endorsed by the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, the Royal Australian College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists, the Royal College of Pathologists of Australasia, the Australian Cancer Society and the National Health and Medical Research Council) is as follows:

- (a) an examination interval of two years for a person who has no symptoms or history suggestive of abnormal cervical cytology, commencing between the ages of 18 to 20 years, or one or two years after first sexual intercourse, whichever is later;
- (b) cessation of cervical smears at 70 years for a person who has had two normal results within the last five years. A person over 70 who has never been examined, or who request a cervical smear, should be examined.

**Note 1:** As separate items exist for routine examination of cervical smears, treating practitioners are asked to clearly identify on the request form to the pathologist, if the smear has been taken as a routine examination or for the management of a previously detected abnormality (see paragraph PP.11 of Pathology Services Explanatory Notes in Category 6).

**Note 2:** See items 2501 to 2509, and 2600 to 2616 in Group A18 and A19 of Category 1 Professional Attendances and the associated explanatory notes for these items in Category 1 - Professional Attendances.

### **Services rendered to a doctor's dependants, practice partner, or practice partner's dependants**

Medicare benefits are not paid for professional services rendered by a medical practitioner to dependants or partners or a partner's dependants.

A 'dependant' person is a spouse or a child. The following provides definitions of these dependant persons:

- (a) a spouse, in relation to a dependant person means:
  - a. a person who is legally married to, and is not living, on a permanent basis, separately and apart from, that person; and
  - b. a de facto spouse of that person.
- (b) a child, in relation to a dependant person means:
  - a. a child under the age of 16 years who is in the custody, care and control of the person or the spouse of the person; and
  - b. a person who:
    - (i) has attained the age of 16 years who is in the custody, care and control of the person or the spouse of the person; or
    - (ii) is receiving full time education at a school, college or university; and
    - (iii) is not being paid a disability support pension under the Social Security Act 1991; and
    - (iv) is wholly or substantially dependent on the person or on the spouse of the person.

#### **G14.1 Principles of interpretation of the MBS**

Each professional service listed in the MBS is a complete medical service. Where a listed service is also a component of a more comprehensive service covered by another item, the benefit for the latter service will cover the former.

Where a service is rendered partly by one medical practitioner and partly by another, only the one amount of benefit is payable. For example, where a radiographic examination is started by one medical practitioner and finalised by another.

#### **G14.2 Services attracting benefits on an attendance basis**

Some services are not listed in the MBS because they are regarded as forming part of a consultation or

they attract benefits on an attendance basis.

### **G14.3 Consultation and procedures rendered at the one attendance**

Where, during a single attendance, a consultation (under Category 1 of the MBS) and another medical service (under any other Category of the Schedule) occur, benefits are payable subject to certain exceptions, for both the consultation and the other service. Benefits are not payable for the consultation in addition to an item rendered on the same occasion where the item is qualified by words such as "each attendance", "attendance at which", "including associated attendances/consultations", and all items in Group T6 and T9. In the case of radiotherapy treatment (Group T2 of Category 3) benefits are payable for both the radiotherapy and an initial referred consultation.

Where the level of benefit for an attendance depends upon the consultation time (for example, in psychiatry), the time spent in carrying out a procedure which is covered by another item in the MBS, may not be included in the consultation time.

A consultation fee may only be charged if a consultation occurs; that is, it is not expected that consultation fee will be charged on every occasion a procedure is performed.

### **G14.4 Aggregate items**

The MBS includes a number of items which apply only in conjunction with another specified service listed in the MBS. These items provide for the application of a fixed loading or factor to the fee and benefit for the service with which they are rendered.

When these particular procedures are rendered in conjunction, the legislation provides for the procedures to be regarded as one service and for a single patient gap to apply. The Schedule fee for the service will be ascertained in accordance with the particular rules shown in the relevant items.

### **G14.5 Residential aged care facility**

A residential aged care facility is defined in the *Aged Care Act 1997*; the definition includes facilities formerly known as nursing homes and hostels.

### **G15.1 Practitioners should maintain adequate and contemporaneous records**

All practitioners who provide, or initiate, a service for which a Medicare benefit is payable, should ensure they maintain **adequate** and **contemporaneous** records.

**Note:** 'Practitioner' is defined in Section 81 of the *Health Insurance Act 1973* and includes: medical practitioners, dentists, optometrists, chiropractors, physiotherapists, podiatrists and osteopaths.

Since 1 November 1999 PSR Committees determining issues of inappropriate practice have been obliged to consider if the practitioner kept adequate and contemporaneous records. It will be up to the peer judgement of the PSR Committee to decide if a practitioner's records meet the prescribed standards.

The standards which determine if a record is adequate and contemporaneous are prescribed in the *Health Insurance (Professional Services Review) Regulations 1999*.

To be **adequate**, the patient or clinical record needs to:

- clearly identify the name of the patient; and
- contain a separate entry for each attendance by the patient for a service and the date on which the service was rendered or initiated; and
- each entry needs to provide clinical information adequate to explain the type of service rendered or initiated; and
- each entry needs to be sufficiently comprehensible that another practitioner, relying on the record, can effectively undertake the patient's ongoing care.

To be **contemporaneous**, the patient or clinical record should be completed at the time that the service was rendered or initiated or as soon as practicable afterwards. Records for hospital patients are usually kept by the hospital and the practitioner could rely on these records to document inpatient care.

The Department of Human Services (DHS) has developed an [Health Practitioner Guideline to substantiate that a specific treatment was performed](#) which is located on the DHS website.

# Associated Notes for Items: 10986, 701, 703, 705, 707

## A25 Health Assessments (Items 701, 703, 705, 707)

There are four time-based health assessment items, consisting of brief, standard, long and prolonged consultations.

### Brief Health Assessment (MBS Item 701)

A brief health assessment is used to undertake simple health assessments. The health assessment should take no more than 30 minutes to complete.

### Standard Health Assessment (MBS Item 703)

A standard health assessment is used for straightforward assessments where the patient does not present with complex health issues but may require more attention than can be provided in a brief assessment. The assessment lasts more than 30 minutes but takes less than 45 minutes.

### Long Health Assessment (MBS Item 705)

A long health assessment is used for an extensive assessment, where the patient has a range of health issues that require more in-depth consideration, and longer-term strategies for managing the patient's health may be necessary. The assessment lasts at least 45 minutes but less than 60 minutes.

### Prolonged Health Assessment (MBS Item 707)

A prolonged health assessment is used for a complex assessment of a patient with significant, long-term health needs that need to be managed through a comprehensive preventive health care plan. The assessment takes 60 minutes or more to complete.

Medical practitioners may select one of the MBS health assessment items to provide a health assessment service to a member of any of the target groups listed in the table below. The health assessment item that is selected will depend on the time taken to complete the health assessment service. This is determined by the complexity of the patient's presentation and the specific requirements that have been established for each target group eligible for health assessments.

MBS Items 701, 703, 705 and 707 may be used to undertake a health assessment for the following target groups:

Target Group	Frequency of Service
A type 2 diabetes risk evaluation for people aged 40-49 years (inclusive) with a high risk of developing type 2 diabetes as determined by the Australian Type 2 Diabetes Risk Assessment Tool	Once every three years to an eligible patient
A health assessment for people aged 45-49 years (inclusive) who are at risk of developing chronic disease	Once only to an eligible patient
A health assessment for people aged 75 years and older	Provided annually to an eligible patient
A comprehensive medical assessment for permanent residents of residential aged care facilities	Provided annually to an eligible patient
A health assessment for people with an intellectual disability	Provided annually to an eligible patient
A health assessment for refugees and other humanitarian entrants	Once only to an eligible patient
A health assessment for former serving members of the Australian Defence Force	Once only to an eligible patient

A health assessment means the assessment of a patient's health and physical, psychological and social function and consideration of whether preventive health care and education should be offered to the patient, to improve that patient's health and physical, psychological and social function.

Health assessments are not available to people who are in-patients of a hospital or care recipients in a residential aged care facility (with the exception of a comprehensive medical assessment provided to a permanent resident of a residential aged care facility).

Before a health assessment is commenced, the patient (and/or his or her parent(s), carer or representative, as appropriate) must be given an explanation of the health assessment process and its likely benefits. The patient must be asked whether he or she consents to the health assessment being performed. In cases where the patient is not capable of giving consent, consent must be given by his or her parent(s), carer or representative. Consent to the health assessment must be noted in the patient's records.

A health assessment must include the following elements:

- (a) information collection, including taking a patient history and undertaking or arranging examinations and investigations as required;
- (b) making an overall assessment of the patient;
- (c) recommending appropriate interventions;
- (d) providing advice and information to the patient;
- (e) keeping a record of the health assessment, and offering the patient a written report about the health assessment, with recommendations about matters covered by the health assessment; and
- (f) offering the patient's carer (if any, and if the medical practitioner considers it appropriate and the patient agrees) a copy of the report or extracts of the report relevant to the carer.

A health assessment may only be claimed by a medical practitioner (including a general practitioner but not including a specialist or consultant physician).

A health assessment should generally be undertaken by the patient's 'usual doctor'. For the purpose of the health assessment items, 'usual doctor' means the medical practitioner, or a medical practitioner working in the medical practice, which has provided the majority of primary health care to the patient over the previous twelve months and/or will be providing the majority of care to the patient over the next twelve months.

A health assessment should not take the form of a health screening service.

MBS health assessment items 701, 703, 705, 707 must be provided by a medical practitioner personally attending upon a patient. Suitably qualified health professionals, such as practice nurses or Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health practitioners, employed and/or otherwise engaged by a general practice or health service, may assist medical practitioners in performing health assessments. Such assistance must be provided in accordance with accepted medical practice and under the supervision of the medical practitioner. This may include activities associated with:

- information collection; and
- providing patients with information about recommended interventions at the direction of the medical practitioner.

The medical practitioner should be satisfied that the assisting health professional has the necessary skills, expertise and training to collect the information required for the health assessment.

Medical practitioners should not conduct a separate consultation for another health-related issue in conjunction with a health assessment unless it is clinically necessary (ie. the patient has an acute problem that needs to be managed separately from the assessment). The only exception is the comprehensive medical assessment, where, if this health assessment is undertaken during the course of a consultation for another purpose, the health assessment item and the relevant item for the other consultation may both be claimed.

Items 701, 703, 705 and 707 do not apply for services that are provided by any other Commonwealth or State funded services. However, where an exemption under subsection 19(2) of the *Health Insurance Act 1973* has been granted to an Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Service or State/Territory Government health clinic, items 701, 703, 705 and 707 can be claimed for services provided by medical practitioners salaried by or contracted to, the Service or health clinic. All other requirements of the items must be met.

Item 10990 or 10991 (bulk billing incentives) can be claimed in conjunction with any health assessment, provided the conditions of item 10990 and 10991 are satisfied.

#### **A26 Health Assessment provided as a type 2 diabetes risk evaluation for people aged 40-49 years with a high risk of developing type 2 diabetes as determined by the Australian Type 2 Diabetes Risk Assessment Tool**

Items 701, 703, 705 and 707 may be used to undertake a type 2 diabetes risk evaluation for people aged 40-49 years (inclusive) with a high risk of developing type 2 diabetes, as determined by the Australian Type 2 Diabetes Risk Assessment Tool.



The aim of this health assessment is to review the factors underlying the 'high risk' score identified by the Australian Type 2 Diabetes Risk Assessment Tool to instigate early interventions, such as lifestyle modification programs, to assist with the prevention of type 2 diabetes.

The Australian Type 2 Diabetes Risk Assessment Tool has been developed to provide a basis for both health professionals and health consumers to assess the risk of type 2 diabetes. It consists of a short list of questions which, when completed, provides a guide to a patient's current level of risk of developing type 2 diabetes. The item scores and risk rating calculations in the tool have been developed using demographic, lifestyle, anthropometric and biomedical data from the 2000 Australian Diabetes, Obesity and Lifestyle baseline survey and the AusDiab 2005 follow-up study.

The Australian Type 2 Diabetes Risk Assessment Tool can be obtained from [the Department's prevention of diabetes web page](#).

Clinical risk factors that the medical practitioner must consider when providing this health assessment include:

- (a) lifestyle, such as smoking, physical inactivity and poor nutrition;
- (b) biomedical risk factors, such as high blood pressure, impaired glucose metabolism and excess weight;
- (c) any relevant recent diagnostic test results; and
- (d) a family history of chronic disease.

The health assessment must include the following:

- (a) evaluating a patient's high risk score, as determined by the Australian Type 2 Diabetes Risk Assessment Tool which has been completed by the patient within a period of 3 months prior to undertaking the health assessment;
- (b) updating the patient's history and undertaking physical examinations and clinical investigations in accordance with relevant guidelines;
- (c) making an overall assessment of the patient's risk factors and of the results of relevant examinations and investigations;
- (d) initiating interventions, if appropriate, including referral to a lifestyle modification program and follow-up relating to the management of any risk factors identified (further information is available at [the Department's prevention of diabetes web page](#)); and
- (e) providing the patient with advice and information (such as the Lifescript resources produced by the Department of Health), including strategies to achieve lifestyle and behaviour changes if appropriate (further information is available at [the Department's Lifescript web page](#)).

The completion of the Australian Type 2 Diabetes Risk Assessment Tool is mandatory for patient access to this health assessment. The tool can be completed either by the patient or with the assistance of a health professional or practice staff. Patients with a 'high' score result are eligible for the health assessment, and subsequent referral to the subsidised lifestyle modification programs if appropriate (further information is available at [the Department's prevention of diabetes web page](#)).

A health assessment for a type 2 diabetes risk evaluation for people aged 40-49 years with a high risk of developing type 2 diabetes as determined by the Australian Type 2 Diabetes Risk Assessment Tool may only be claimed once every three years by an eligible patient.

## **A27 Health Assessment provided for people aged 45-49 years who are at risk of developing chronic disease**

Items 701, 703, 705 and 707 may be used to undertake a [health assessment for people aged 45-49 years \(inclusive\) who are at risk of developing chronic disease](#).

For the purposes of this health assessment, a patient is at risk of developing a chronic disease if, in the clinical judgement of the attending medical practitioner, a specific risk factor for chronic disease is identified.

Risk factors that the medical practitioner can consider include, but are not limited to:

- (a) lifestyle risk factors, such as smoking, physical inactivity, poor nutrition or alcohol use;
- (b) biomedical risk factors, such as high cholesterol, high blood pressure, impaired glucose metabolism or excess weight; or
- (c) family history of a chronic disease.

A chronic disease or condition is one that has been or is likely to be present for at least six months, including but not limited to asthma, cancer, cardiovascular illness, diabetes mellitus, mental health conditions, arthritis and musculoskeletal conditions.

If, after receiving this health assessment, a patient is identified as having a high risk of type 2 diabetes as determined by the Australian Type 2 Diabetes Risk Assessment Tool, the medical practitioner may refer that person to a subsidised lifestyle modification program, along with other possible strategies to

improve the health status of the patient (further information is available at <http://www.health.gov.au/preventionoftype2diabetes>).

The Australian Type 2 Diabetes Risk Assessment Tool can be obtained from <http://www.health.gov.au/preventionoftype2diabetes>

A health assessment for people aged 45-49 years who are at risk of developing chronic disease may only be claimed once by an eligible patient.

### **A28 Health Assessment provided for people aged 75 years and older**

Items 701, 703, 705 and 707 may be used to undertake a health assessment for people aged 75 years and older.

A health assessment for people aged 75 years and older is an assessment of a patient's health and physical, psychological and social function for the purpose of initiating preventive health care and/or medical interventions as appropriate.

This health assessment must include:

- (a) measurement of the patient's blood pressure, pulse rate and rhythm;
- (b) an assessment of the patient's medication;
- (c) an assessment of the patient's continence;
- (d) an assessment of the patient's immunisation status for influenza, tetanus and pneumococcus;
- (e) an assessment of the patient's physical function, including the patient's activities of daily living, and whether or not the patient has had a fall in the last 3 months;
- (f) an assessment of the patient's psychological function, including the patient's cognition and mood; and
- (g) an assessment of the patient's social function, including the availability and adequacy of paid and unpaid help, and whether the patient is responsible for caring for another person.
- (h) A health assessment for people aged 75 years and older may be claimed once every twelve months by an eligible patient.

### **A29 Health Assessment provided as a comprehensive medical assessment for residents of residential aged care facilities**

Items 701, 703, 705 and 707 may be used to undertake a comprehensive medical assessment of a resident of a residential aged care facility

This health assessment requires assessment of the resident's health and physical and psychological function, and must include:

- (a) making a written summary of the comprehensive medical assessment;
- (b) developing a list of diagnoses and medical problems based on the medical history and examination;
- (c) providing a copy of the summary to the residential aged care facility; and
- (d) offering the resident a copy of the summary.

A residential aged care facility is a facility in which residential care services, as defined in the *Aged Care Act 1997*, are provided. This includes facilities that were formerly known as nursing homes and hostels. A person is a resident of a residential aged care facility if the person has been admitted as a permanent resident of that facility.

This health assessment is available to new residents on admission into a residential aged care facility. It is recommended that new residents should receive the health assessment as soon as possible after admission, preferably within six weeks following admission into a residential aged care facility.

A health assessment for the purpose of a comprehensive medical assessment of a resident of a residential aged care facility may be claimed by an eligible patient:

- (a) on admission to a residential aged care facility, provided that a comprehensive medical assessment has not already been provided in another residential aged care facility within the previous 12 months; and
- (b) at 12 month intervals thereafter.

### A30 Health Assessment provided for people with an intellectual disability

Items 701, 703, 705 and 707 may be used to undertake a health assessment for people with an intellectual disability.

A person is considered to have an intellectual disability if they have significantly sub-average general intellectual functioning (two standard deviations below the average intelligence quotient [IQ]) and would benefit from assistance with daily living activities. Where medical practitioners wish to confirm intellectual disability and a patient's need for assistance with activities of daily living, they may seek verification from a paediatrician registered to practice in Australia or from a government-provided or funded disability service that has assessed the patient's intellectual function.

The health assessment provides a structured clinical framework for medical practitioners to comprehensively assess the physical, psychological and social function of patients with an intellectual disability and to identify any medical intervention and preventive health care required. The health assessment must include the following items as relevant to the patient or his or her representative:

- (a) Check dental health (including dentition);
- (b) Conduct aural examination (arrange formal audiometry if audiometry has not been conducted within 5 years);
- (c) Assess ocular health (arrange review by an ophthalmologist or optometrist if a comprehensive eye examination has not been conducted within 5 years);
- (d) Assess nutritional status (including weight and height measurements) and a review of growth and development;
- (e) Assess bowel and bladder function (particularly for incontinence or chronic constipation);
- (f) Assess medications (including non-prescription medicines taken by the patient, prescriptions from other doctors, medications prescribed but not taken, interactions, side effects and review of indications);
  - Advise carers of the common side effects and interactions.
  - Consider the need for a formal medication review.
- (g) Check immunisation status, including influenza, tetanus, hepatitis A and B, Measles, Mumps and Rubella (MMR) and pneumococcal vaccinations;
- (h) Check exercise opportunities (with the aim of moderate exercise for at least 30 minutes per day);
- (i) Check whether the support provided for activities of daily living adequately and appropriately meets the patient's needs, and consider formal review if required;
- (j) Consider the need for breast examination, mammography, Papanicolaou smears, testicular examination, lipid measurement and prostate assessment as for the general population;
- (k) Check for dysphagia and gastro-oesophageal disease (especially for patients with cerebral palsy), and arrange for investigation or treatment as required;
- (l) Assess risk factors for osteoporosis (including diet, exercise, Vitamin D deficiency, hormonal status, family history, medication fracture history) and arrange for investigation or treatment as required;
- (m) For patients diagnosed with epilepsy, review of seizure control (including anticonvulsant drugs) and consider referral to a neurologist at appropriate intervals;
- (n) Check for thyroid disease at least every two years (or yearly for patients with Down syndrome);
- (o) For patients without a definitive aetiological diagnosis, consider referral to a genetic clinic every 5 years;
- (p) Assess or review treatment for co-morbid mental health issues;
- (q) Consider timing of puberty and management of sexual development, sexual activity and reproductive health; and
- (r) Consider whether there are any signs of physical, psychological or sexual abuse.

A health assessment for people with an intellectual disability may be claimed once every twelve months by an eligible patient.

### A31 Health Assessment provided for refugees and other humanitarian entrants

Items 701, 703, 705 and 707 may be used to undertake a health assessment for refugees and other humanitarian entrants.

The purpose of this health assessment is to introduce new refugees and other humanitarian entrants to the Australian primary health care system, as soon as possible after their arrival in Australia (within twelve months of arrival).

The health assessment applies to humanitarian entrants who are resident in Australia with access to Medicare services. This includes Refugees, Special Humanitarian Program and Protection Program entrants with the following visas:

Offshore Refugee Category including:

- (a) 200 Refugee
- (b) 201 In Country Special Humanitarian
- (c) 203 Emergency rescue
- (d) 204 Women at Risk
- (e) Offshore - Special Humanitarian Program
- (f) 202 Global Special Humanitarian

Offshore - Temporary Humanitarian Visas (THV) including:

- (g) Subclass 695 (Return Pending)
- (h) Subclass 070 (Removal Pending Bridging)

Onshore Protection Program including:

- (i) 866 Permanent Protection Visa (PPV)
- (j) 785 Temporary Protection Visa (TPV)

Patients should be asked to provide proof of their visa status and date of arrival in Australia. Alternatively, medical practitioners may telephone the Department of Human Services on 132011, with the patient present, to check eligibility.

The medical practitioner and patient can use the service of a translator by accessing the Commonwealth Government's Translating and Interpreting Service (TIS) and the Doctors Priority Line. To be eligible for the fee-free TIS and Doctors Priority Line, the medical examiner must be in a private practice and provide a Medicare service to patients who do not speak English and are permanent residents.

A health assessment for refugees and other humanitarian entrants may only be claimed once by an eligible patient.

#### **A58 Australian Defence Force Post-discharge GP Health Assessment**

Items 701, 703, 705 and 707 may be used to undertake a health assessment for a former serving member of the Australian Defence Force, including a former member of permanent and reserve forces.

A health assessment for a former serving member of the Australian Defence Force is an assessment of:

- (a) a patient's physical and psychological health and social function; and
- (b) whether health care, education and other assistance should be offered to the patient to improve their physical, psychological health or social function.

This health assessment must include:

- (a) a personal attendance by a medical practitioner; and
- (b) taking the patient's history, including the following:
  - i. the patient's service with the Australian Defence Force, including service type, years of service, field of work, number of deployments and reason for discharge;
  - ii. the patient's social history, including relationship status, number of children (if any) and current occupation;
  - iii. the patient's current medical conditions;
  - iv. whether the patient suffers from hearing loss or tinnitus;

- v. the patient's use of medication, including medication prescribed by another doctor and medication obtained without a prescription;
- vi. the patient's smoking, if applicable;
- vii. the patient's alcohol use, if applicable;
- viii. the patient's substance use, if applicable;
- ix. the patient's level of physical activity;
- x. whether the patient has bodily pain;
- xi. whether the patient has difficulty getting to sleep or staying asleep;
- xii. whether the patient has psychological distress;
- xiii. whether the patient has posttraumatic stress disorder;
- xiv. whether the patient is at risk of harm to self or others;
- xv. whether the patient has anger problems;
- xvi. the patient's sexual health;
- xvii. any other health concerns the patient has.

The assessment must also include the following:

- i. measuring the patient's height;
- ii. weighing the patient and ascertaining, or asking the patient, whether the patient's weight has changed in the last 12 months;
- iii. measuring the patient's waist circumference;
- iv. taking the patient's blood pressure;
- v. using information gained in the course of taking the patient's history to assess whether any further assessment of the patient's health is necessary;
- vi. either making the further assessment or referring the patient to another medical practitioner who can make the further assessment;
- vii. documenting a strategy for improving the patient's health;
- viii. offering to give the patient a written report of the assessment that makes recommendations for treating the patient including preventive health measures;
- ix. keeping a record of the assessment.

A medical practitioner may use the 'ADF Post-discharge GP Health Assessment Tool' as a screening tool for the health assessment. This assessment tool can be viewed on the At Ease portal of the Department of Veterans' Affairs' website at: <http://at-ease.dva.gov.au>. Other assessment tools mentioned in the Department of Veteran's Affairs Mental Health Advice Book may be relevant and can also be viewed on the At Ease portal.

This health assessment may only be claimed once by an eligible patient.

The health assessment must not be performed in conjunction with a separate consultation in relation to the patient unless the consultation is clinically necessary.

The health assessment must be performed by the patient's usual doctor.

# Associated Items: 10986, 701, 703, 705, 707

## HEALTH ASSESSMENTS

The category of people eligible for health assessments are :

- a) People aged 40 to 49 years (inclusive) with a high risk of developing type 2 diabetes as determined by the Australian Type 2 Diabetes Risk Assessment Tool
- b) People between the age of 45 and 49 (inclusive) who are at risk of developing a chronic disease
- c) People aged 75 years and older
- d) Permanent residents of a Residential Aged Care Facility
- e) People who have an intellectual disability
- f) Humanitarian entrants who are resident in Australia with access to Medicare services, including Refugees and Special Humanitarian Program and Protection Program entrants
- g) Former serving members of the Australian Defence Force including former members of permanent and reserve forces

### 701

#### HEALTH ASSESSMENT - BRIEF

Attendance by a medical practitioner (including a general practitioner, but not including a specialist or consultant physician) to perform a brief health assessment, lasting not more than 30 minutes and, including:

- a) Collection of relevant information, including taking a patient history;
- b) A basic physical examination;
- c) Initiating interventions and referrals as indicated; and
- d) Providing the patient with preventive health care advice and information.

(See para [A25](#), [A26](#), [A27](#), [A28](#), [A29](#), [A30](#), [A31](#), [A58](#) of explanatory notes to this Category)

**Fee:** \$59.35 **Benefit:** 100% = \$59.35

**Extended Medicare Safety Net Cap:** \$178.05

### 703

#### HEALTH ASSESSMENT - STANDARD

Attendance by a medical practitioner (including a general practitioner, but not including a specialist or consultant physician) to perform a standard health assessment, lasting more than 30 minutes but less than 45 minutes, including:

- a) Detailed information collection, including taking a patient history;
- b) An extensive physical examination;
- c) Initiating interventions and referrals as indicated; and
- d) Providing a preventive health care strategy for the patient.

(See para [A25](#), [A26](#), [A27](#), [A28](#), [A29](#), [A30](#), [A31](#), [A58](#) of explanatory notes to this Category)

**Fee:** \$137.90 **Benefit:** 100% = \$137.90

**Extended Medicare Safety Net Cap:** \$413.70

### 705

#### HEALTH ASSESSMENT - LONG

Attendance by a medical practitioner (including a general practitioner, but not including a specialist or consultant physician) to perform a long health

assessment, lasting at least 45 minutes but less than 60 minutes, including:

- a) Comprehensive information collection, including taking a patient history;
- b) An extensive examination of the patient's medical condition and physical function;
- c) Initiating interventions and referrals as indicated; and
- d) Providing a basic preventive health care management plan for the patient.

(See para [A25](#), [A26](#), [A27](#), [A28](#), [A29](#), [A30](#), [A31](#), [A58](#) of explanatory notes to this Category)

**Fee:** \$190.30 **Benefit:** 100% = \$190.30

**Extended Medicare Safety Net Cap:** \$500.00

**707**

#### **HEALTH ASSESSMENT - PROLONGED**

Attendance by a medical practitioner (including a general practitioner, but not including a specialist or consultant physician) to perform a prolonged health assessment, lasting at least 60 minutes, including:

- a) Comprehensive information collection, including taking a patient history;
- b) An extensive examination of the patient's medical condition, and physical, psychological and social function.
- c) Initiating interventions and referrals as indicated; and
- d) Providing a comprehensive preventive health care management plan for the patient.

(See para [A25](#), [A26](#), [A27](#), [A28](#), [A29](#), [A30](#), [A31](#), [A58](#) of explanatory notes to this Category)

**Fee:** \$268.80 **Benefit:** 100% = \$268.80

**Extended Medicare Safety Net Cap:** \$500.00