

Pathology

AUSTRALIA

October 2008 • Volume 1 Issue 1

Medicare pathology cuts and your patients



Many of the patients you see will undoubtedly require pathology investigations to assist you to confidently proceed with the best course of treatment. Pathology will be a critical path to a successful treatment outcome.

Pathologists know the importance of quick and accurate investigations for you and your patients. It is important that you receive convenient access to pathology collection facilities that are available across Australia. These pathology investigations are a necessity, and we will continue to keep providing this high quality service.

However, as a result of the last Federal Budget, many of the investigations you use to monitor and manage chronic

conditions either no longer attract a Medicare rebate or receive a reduced Medicare rebate. Your patients may now have to meet the cost of investigations including those for:

- Diabetes
- Cancer
- Infertility
- Rheumatoid arthritis
- HIV
- Hepatitis

What's best for your patients?

Like you, the Australian Association of Pathology Practices (AAPP) and its members face ongoing challenges with

diminishing Medicare rebates. Like you, we have got to keep pace with practice costs. And, like you, we are committed to patients and understand the need for access to our services by all Australians, regardless of their financial situation.

But this task is getting more difficult and the AAPP is disappointed with the recent Federal Budget announcement that \$180 million over the next four years will be removed from pathology funding. The Government's decision means that three important items are to be deleted from the Medicare Benefits Schedule:

In this issue

- Medicare pathology cuts and your patients
- The role of the AAPP
- Where to go for more information

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- Item 66515 – 6 or more tests related to, among other tests, **kidney and liver function tests**;
- Item 66710 – 6 or more tests related to **hormones and associated proteins tests**;
- Item 69399 – 6 or more tests **for antibodies to infections: for example, bacteria or viruses.**

This is in addition to the “grand cone” whereby Pathologists are unable to charge Medicare for more than 3 tests ordered by a General Practitioner. This will result in an estimated cost to Pathologists of more than \$200 million per year.

We have, in the past 10 years, achieved more than \$3 billion worth of savings for the Government, and through this, to your patients. Pathologists have kept costs low, and via increased efficiency, we will endeavour to continue that level of surety.

For 20 years, the AAPP has worked cooperatively with the Government to ensure that we achieve high quality outcomes for all Australians. We are working hard to build a constructive relationship with the new Government, despite our disappointment with the Budget.

What does the future hold?

The viability of many new and existing preventive health programs relies on Pathologists to deliver accurate pathology results. Bowel cancer screening programs, pre-diabetes and cholesterol tests, women’s health programs – such as breast screening, biopsies and pap smears – and men’s health programs, are a few important examples that continue to be funded under Medicare.

Currently, the Federal Government is restructuring the health system through a number of initiatives, including a Preventative Health Taskforce. We would like to enhance this vision by strengthening services that play



a vital role in preventing medical problems and managing chronic health conditions. We want to work with the Government to find a solution and ensure the recognition that pathology investigations are a crucial element in Australia’s new health system.

The AAPP is concerned that the Government did not discuss its recent Budget decision with us, as we are always pleased to work with them to ensure the best outcomes for your patients.

We are committed to delivering reliable and affordable pathology investigations to you and your patients.

The role of the AAPP?

The AAPP is the national peak body and voice for private pathology in Australia. The AAPP represents around 70% of private pathology practices. Our members are committed to helping patients access the highest quality pathology services. The AAPP and its members continue to build safe, accessible, cost effective and affordable pathology services throughout Australia.

Need more information?



If you’d like to know more about this situation, please visit www.pathologyaustralia.com.au.

This website will provide you with information about issues that affect you and your patients, and the ongoing provision of high quality pathology services.

Thank you