

Monday 28 September 2015

MBS REVIEW: BY CLINICIANS AND PATIENTS – NOT MEDIA

The following is provided from Australian Diagnostic Imaging Association (ADIA) President Dr. Christian Wriedt:

“The Review of the Medicare Benefits Schedule is a critical process that must have integrity if Medicare is to move into the 21st Century. Doctors and patients need to know that the MBS Review is both evidence-based from a technical stand point and seeks the relevant input from the patient perspective.

“ADIA is, therefore, extremely concerned that the advice and credibility of the many clinicians who have agreed to contribute to the Review will be undermined by pre-emptive assertions in the media by the Government.

“By way of illustration, the review of imaging for low back pain has not concluded; yet the Minister for Health said yesterday “a lot of people with lower back pain get sent for a barrage of scans”. In reality, less than one in 10 patients referred for imaging of the lumbar spine have more than one scan.

“ADIA considers the media should be fully briefed only after the technical evidence and the patient perspective have been fully and comprehensively considered.

“It is also ADIA’s position that the MBS Review recommendations need to be fair for patients. It is imperative that we don’t create a two-tiered health system where some Australians cannot access the services they are referred for because they cannot afford them. This is already an issue in radiology, despite services being arm’s length-referred by the patient’s doctor.

“GPs are best placed to make clinical judgements about what their patients need, and we can’t allow that to become hamstrung by hurdles, rules and red tape that adds cost and gets in the way of patient care.

“This is what has been happening over the past decade with less than 5% of new imaging items on the Medicare schedule representing genuine new services – just 22 items over 10 years – while more than 75% are simply duplicate services at lower rebate levels for imaging performed on older equipment.

“The Review is the best forum to consider these critical issues, not in the media.”

MBS Today		Benefits 14/15
Number of diagnostic imaging items on the MBS	983	
Number of diagnostic imaging items that represent duplicate services at lower rebate levels for imaging performed on older equipment	456 (46% of total diagnostic imaging items)	1% of benefits
Past 10 Years		
Number of diagnostic imaging items added to the MBS since 2004	487 (375 new items were red tape*)	
Number of genuine new diagnostic imaging services for patients since 2004	22 ONLY	2.3% of benefits

*Capital sensitive (NK) items and services determined by the providing practitioner (NR)