

**House of Representatives Standing Committee on Health**

**ANSWERS TO QUESTIONS ON NOTICE – HEPATITIS C INQUIRY**

**Hepatitis C in Australia**

**20 March 2015**

**QoN No: 1**

**Topic:** Medical Benefits Schedule - Hepatitis C Testing

**Type of Question:** Hansard Page 60, 20 March 2015

**Chair:** Mr Irons

**Question:**

CHAIR: Do you as witnesses appearing before the committee have any objection to being recorded by media during participation in this hearing? I will take that response as a no. Thank you. If you have not already done so, please read the document on the witness table referring to parliamentary privilege, which I am sure you are all away of. Thank you for making yourselves available a little earlier, on a late Friday afternoon, for the committee. Would one or all of you like to make a brief opening statement? I hear you saying no, so I will go straight to question time.

My first question is in regard to a response we got back from the hearing in Sydney. It looks like question No. 3, in regard to the quantity of tests that the \$7.8 million represents. The answer gives us the medical benefits schedule and a list of 17 items, but it does not give us the number of tests that make up that \$7.8 million. Is there a chance of getting that?

Prof. Baggoley: We might have to take it on notice. But we are just looking through our folders, because we did have our answers to questions on notice here.

CHAIR: You might have answered it, but I cannot see the answer. It is on page 105 of the papers we have got. I do not know if you have got those papers.

Prof. Baggoley: I have got so many pages!

CHAIR: It is that one there, I think.

Ms Jonasson: Just bear with us a moment.

CHAIR: Okay.

Prof. Baggoley: Graeme, can you help as well? That tells us that we provided answers on items, by the look of it.

Ms Jonasson: Yes, we did.

Prof. Baggoley: But not the numbers.

CHAIR: My question was: how many tests does that represent, that figure of \$7.8 million?

Ms Jonasson: We will have to take that on notice, sorry.

CHAIR: Seeing as you have already broken it down into item numbers, maybe you can break the quantities down! There might have been an extra column on the spreadsheet that showed you that. But that would be interesting to know. If you can come back to us on that one, that would be great.

**Answer:**

There are 17 items that can be used for Hepatitis C testing on the MBS, these are broken into tests exclusively for Hepatitis C and combine testing which includes but is not limited to Hepatitis C testing in the follow way:

- eight items exclusively for Hepatitis C testing; 69445, 69451, 69488, 69489, 69491, 69492, 69499, 69500, these total 58,979 services in the 2013-14 financial year;
- five items are combined pregnancy serology tests (which may include but is not limited to Hepatitis C testing); 69405, 69408, 69411, 69413, 69415, totalling 259,460 services in the 2013-14 financial year; and
- four number of items are for detection of Hepatitis (including but not limited to Hepatitis C); 69475, 69478, 69481, 69484, equalling a total of 1,255,102 services provided in the 2013-14 financial year.

Table: Item numbers, descriptors, and service numbers for Hepatitis C testing (Category 6 – Pathology, Group 3 – Microbiology).

Item number	Descriptor	Services 2013-14
69405	Microbiological serology during a pregnancy (except in the investigation of a clinically apparent intercurrent microbial illness or close contact with a patient suffering from parvovirus infection or varicella during that pregnancy) including: (a) the determination of 1 of the following - rubella immune status, specific syphilis serology, carriage of Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C antibody, HIV antibody and (b) (if performed) a service described in 1 or more of items 69384, 69475, 69478 and 69481 (See para P16.7 of explanatory notes to this Category) <b>Fee:</b> \$15.65 <b>Benefit:</b> 75% = \$11.75 85% = \$13.35	18,455
69408	Microbiological serology during a pregnancy (except in the investigation of a clinically apparent intercurrent microbial illness or close contact with a patient suffering from parvovirus infection or varicella during that pregnancy) including: (a) the determination of 2 of the following - rubella immune status, specific syphilis serology, carriage of Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C antibody, HIV antibody and (b) (if performed) a service described in 1 or more of items 69384, 69475, 69478 and 69481 (See para P16.7 of explanatory notes to this Category) <b>Fee:</b> \$29.00 <b>Benefit:</b> 75% = \$21.75 85% = \$24.65	10,118
69411	Microbiological serology during a pregnancy (except in the investigation of a clinically apparent intercurrent microbial illness or close contact with a patient suffering from parvovirus infection or varicella during that pregnancy) including: (a) the determination of 3 of the following - rubella immune status, specific syphilis serology, carriage of Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C antibody, HIV antibody and (b) (if performed) a service described in 1 or more of items 69384, 69475, 69478 and 69481 (See para P16.7 of explanatory notes to this Category) <b>Fee:</b> \$42.35 <b>Benefit:</b> 75% = \$31.80 85% = \$36.00	18,298

69413	Microbiological serology during a pregnancy (except in the investigation of a clinically apparent intercurrent microbial illness or close contact with a patient suffering from parvovirus infection or varicella during that pregnancy) including: (a) the determination of 4 of the following - rubella immune status, specific syphilis serology, carriage of Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C antibody, HIV antibody and (b) (if performed) a service described in 1 or more of items 69384, 69475, 69478 and 69481 (See para P16.7 of explanatory notes to this Category) <b>Fee:</b> \$55.70 <b>Benefit:</b> 75% = \$41.80 85% = \$47.35	51,885
69415	Microbiological serology during a pregnancy (except in the investigation of a clinically apparent intercurrent microbial illness or close contact with a patient suffering from parvovirus infection or varicella during that pregnancy) including: (a) the determination of all 5 of the following - rubella immune status, specific syphilis serology, carriage of Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C antibody, HIV antibody and (b) (if performed) a service described in 1 or more of items 69384, 69475, 69478 and 69481 (See para P16.7 of explanatory notes to this Category) <b>Fee:</b> \$69.10 <b>Benefit:</b> 75% = \$51.85 85% = \$58.75	160,704
69445	Detection of Hepatitis C viral RNA in a patient undertaking antiviral therapy for chronic HCV hepatitis (including a service described in item 69499) - 1 test. To a maximum of 4 of this item in a 12 month period (Item is subject to rule 25) <b>Fee:</b> \$92.20 <b>Benefit:</b> 75% = \$69.15 85% = \$78.40	6,672
69451	A test described in item 69445 if rendered by a receiving APP - 1 test. (Item is subject to rule 18 and 25) <b>Fee:</b> \$92.20 <b>Benefit:</b> 75% = \$69.15 85% = \$78.40	86
69475	One test for hepatitis antigen or antibodies to determine immune status or viral carriage following exposure or vaccination to Hepatitis A, Hepatitis B, Hepatitis C or Hepatitis D (Item subject to rule 11) <b>Fee:</b> \$15.65 <b>Benefit:</b> 75% = \$11.75 85% = \$13.35	130,012
69478	2 tests described in 69475 (Item subject to rule 11) <b>Fee:</b> \$29.25 <b>Benefit:</b> 75% = \$21.95 85% = \$24.90	567,174
69481	Investigation of infectious causes of acute or chronic hepatitis - 3 tests for hepatitis antibodies or antigens, (Item subject to rule 11) (See para P16.8 of explanatory notes to this Category) <b>Fee:</b> \$40.55 <b>Benefit:</b> 75% = \$30.45 85% = \$34.50	510,105
69484	Supplementary testing for Hepatitis B surface antigen or Hepatitis C antibody using a different assay on the specimen which yielded a reactive result on initial testing (Item is subject to rule 18) <b>Fee:</b> \$17.10 <b>Benefit:</b> 75% = \$12.85 85% = \$14.55	47,811

69488	Quantitation of HCV RNA load in plasma or serum in the pretreatment evaluation or the assessment of efficacy of antiviral therapy of a patient with chronic HCV hepatitis - where any request for the test is made by or on the advice of the specialist or consultant physician who manages the treatment of the patient with chronic HCV hepatitis (including a service in item 69499 or 69445) (Item is subject to rule 18 and 25) <b>Fee:</b> \$180.25 <b>Benefit:</b> 75% = \$135.20 85% = \$153.25	21,699
69489	A test described in item 69488 if rendered by a receiving APP (Item is subject to rule 18 and 25) <b>Fee:</b> \$180.25 <b>Benefit:</b> 75% = \$135.20 85% = \$153.25	1,261
69491	Nucleic acid amplification and determination of Hepatitis C virus (HCV) genotype if: (a) the patient is HCV RNA positive and is being evaluated for antiviral therapy of chronic HCV hepatitis; and (b) the request for the test is made by, or on the advice of, the specialist or consultant physician managing the treatment of the patient; To a maximum of 1 of this item in a 12 month period <b>Fee:</b> \$204.80 <b>Benefit:</b> 75% = \$153.60 85% = \$174.10	10,638
69492	A test described in item 69491 if rendered by a receiving APP - 1 test (Item is subject to rule 18 and 25) <b>Fee:</b> \$204.80 <b>Benefit:</b> 75% = \$153.60 85% = \$174.10	732
69499	Detection of Hepatitis C viral RNA if at least 1 of the following criteria is satisfied: (a) the patient is Hepatitis C seropositive; (b) the patient's serological status is uncertain after testing; (c) the test is performed for the purpose of: (i) determining the Hepatitis C status of an immunosuppressed or immunocompromised patient; or (ii) the detection of acute Hepatitis C prior to seroconversion where considered necessary for the clinical management of the patient; To a maximum of 1 of this item in a 12 month period (Item is subject to rule 19 and 25) <b>Fee:</b> \$92.20 <b>Benefit:</b> 75% = \$69.15 85% = \$78.40	16,637
69500	A test described in item 69499 if rendered by a receiving APP – 1 test (Item is subject to rule 18,19 and 25) <b>Fee:</b> \$92.20 <b>Benefit:</b> 75% = \$69.15 85% = \$78.40	1,284