

Senate Community Affairs Committee

ANSWERS TO ESTIMATES QUESTIONS ON NOTICE

HEALTH PORTFOLIO

Budget Estimates 2017 - 2018, 29 & 30 May 2017

Ref No: SQ17-000929

OUTCOME: 4 - Individual Health Benefits

Topic: Musculoskeletal Ultrasound

Type of Question: Written Question on Notice

Senator: Griff, Stirling

Question:

Regarding MBS Item 55850: Musculoskeletal Ultrasound (US) guided injection. I understand the benefit cost per 100,000 population has increased from \$2,036 in 2000/01 to \$114,650 in 2015/16 – a 56-fold increase in cost.

- a) Is the department aware of this increase?
- b) What are the reasons for this increase?
- c) What steps, if any, is the department taking to prevent inappropriate billing for point of care Musculoskeletal Ultrasound by medical practitioners?

Answer:

Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) Item 55850 is a musculoskeletal ultrasound service that is performed in conjunction with a surgical procedure using interventional techniques (such as an image-guided joint injection) and is inclusive of a diagnostic ultrasound examination.

- a) Yes. MBS data for the financial year periods of 2000/2001 to 2015/2016 for the claiming of Item 55850 is at Table 1. This information can also be accessed online at www.medicarestatistics.humanservices.gov.au.
- b) In the 2009/2010 Budget, a decision was made to remove Items 50124 and 50125, which provided for joint injections, from the MBS. This explains some of the increased use of Item 55850 since that time.
- c) The Department of Health undertakes regular compliance to ensure health professionals are claiming Medicare benefits appropriately. Where inappropriate activities are identified, a range of compliance activities are pursued by the Department, including education, review, audit and investigation into breaches of Australian laws.

The MBS Review is an independent, clinician-led process with strategic oversight by a Taskforce comprising of senior clinicians, health policy academics and a consumer representative. To undertake a detailed review of individual MBS items, the Taskforce has established clinical committees with expertise in specific areas of clinical practice. The Diagnostic Imaging Clinical Committee has commenced a review of the items listed in the

Diagnostic Imaging Services Table of the MBS, including Item 55850. Information about the progress of the MBS Review, and reports available for public consultation, can be found online at www.health.gov.au, using the search term 'Medicare Benefits Schedule Review'.

Table 1
Medicare services claimed for Item 55850: Financial years 2003/2004 to 2015/2016

[MBS data, extracted 20 June 2017, based on date of processing for Item 55850]

Year	Services claimed	Annual growth in services claimed
2000/2001	3504	-
2001/2002	7,712	120%
2002/2003	10,876	41%
2003/2004	15,366	41%
2004/2005	20,607	34%
2005/2006	26,522	29%
2006/2007	34,551	30%
2007/2008	45,185	31%
2008/2009	57,790	28%
2009/2010	91,748	59%
2010/2011	120,162	31%
2011/2012	146,190	22%
2012/2013	169,427	16%
2013/2014	192,249	13%
2014/2015	209,529	9%
2015/2016	219,071	5%
Compound annual growth rate	31.7%	