



Australian Government
Medicare Australia

Practice Incentives Program

Quality Prescribing Incentive Guidelines - August 2011

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Introduction

The Practice Incentives Program (PIP) aims to encourage continuing improvements in general practice through financial incentives to support quality care, and improve access and health outcomes for patients. To be eligible to participate in the PIP, a practice must be accredited, or registered for accreditation, against the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) *Standards for general practices*. Practices must achieve full accreditation within 12 months of joining the PIP and maintain full accreditation thereafter.

Payments are made through the PIP:

- to encourage use of electronic health systems
- to ensure patients have access to after hours care
- to support rural practices
- to encourage rural general practitioners (GPs) to provide procedural services
- to support practices to employ practice nurses
- to encourage practices to teach medical students
- for participating in educational activities to improve prescribing behaviour
- to encourage cervical screening
- for best practice management of patients with asthma and diabetes
- to encourage GPs to provide increased and continuing services in Commonwealth-funded Residential Aged Care Facilities
- to support best practice management of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients with chronic disease.

The PIP is administered by Medicare Australia on behalf of the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing (DoHA).

Definition of a GP

For the purposes of the PIP, GPs include general practitioners and/or non-specialist medical practitioners, known as other medical practitioners, who provide non-referred services and are not GPs. General practitioners include Fellows of the RACGP and the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM), vocationally registered general practitioners and medical practitioners undertaking approved training.

The Practice Incentives Program Quality Prescribing Incentive

The PIP Quality Prescribing Incentive (QPI) aims to encourage practices to keep up to date with information on the quality use of medicines. The PIP QPI rewards participation by practices in a range of activities recognised or provided by the National Prescribing Service (NPS).

The NPS aims to assist GPs to achieve more effective, quality prescribing through a range of education, support and prescribing information. The NPS is a professional organisation, run independently of the Australian Government with broad GP representation and leadership.

What are the Practice Incentives Program Quality Prescribing Incentive requirements?

To qualify for a payment through the PIP QPI, practices are required to participate in three activities in the reference period 1 May to 30 April per Full Time Equivalent (FTE) GP per year, on average. One of the activities must be a clinical audit. Any changes in the number of GPs employed by the practice will impact on the total number of QPI activities to be completed. Each activity is undertaken by the individual GP, but payments are made based on practices meeting a minimum participation level in QPI activities.

Recognised activities include:

- A clinical audit of prescribing for specific drug groups, using materials approved or produced by the NPS (available to all practices three to four times a year).
- Case studies using problem-based distance learning provided by the NPS (available to all practices six times a year). The case studies present a clinical scenario accompanied by a set of questions designed to help participants refine their clinical decision-making skills. The NPS presents each case study in two formats, a printed version inserted with NPS News and an online version.
- Practice visit(s) by an independent pharmaceutical detailer working from a number of Divisions of General Practice. These 'academic detailing' visits will act as a resource for GPs and promote the quality use of medicines. The availability of this option may be geographically limited.

For example, a practice with one FTE GP would need to participate in three activities, including at least one clinical audit to receive a payment. A practice with five FTE GPs would need to participate in at least 15 activities, including five clinical audits, to receive a payment. Some GPs in the practice may undertake more or less activities, so long as the practice as a whole averages three activities per FTE GP.

The NPS may recommend additional activities for inclusion in the PIP QPI. Practices will be notified if additional activities become available.

For more information on the NPS or recognised PIP QPI activities go to www.nps.org.au or call **02 8217 8700** or **1300 138 677** (call charges may apply).

What are the Practice Incentives Program Quality Prescribing Incentive payments?

The PIP QPI payments are calculated at \$1.00 per Standardised Whole Patient Equivalent (SWPE) per year.

The payment for the PIP QPI is made to the practice annually in the May quarter.

Medicare Australia calculates payments using information supplied by the NPS on the number of activities undertaken by each GP. To ensure the practice receives the correct payment, each GP must provide their name, contact details, provider and prescriber numbers on the relevant forms to the NPS when undertaking a recognised activity.

Medicare Australia will advise practices through the PIP quarterly payment advice of the expected number of PIP QPI activities that must be completed in order to be eligible for the payment. The number of required activities may vary from quarter to quarter depending on the activities already undertaken and size of the practice. Information on the number of activities completed can be obtained by calling NPS on **02 8217 8700** or **1300 138 677** (call charges may apply).

Is our practice eligible for the Practice Incentives Program Quality Prescribing Incentive?

To be eligible for the PIP QPI, the practice must:

- participate in the PIP
- meet the minimum participation level by 30 April each year (three recognised activities, including one clinical audit per FTE GP each year)
- make sure the NPS is correctly advised of activities completed by practice GPs by 30 April each year.

How does the practice apply for the Practice Incentives Program Quality Prescribing Incentive?

Practices registered for the PIP do not need to apply for this incentive. However, practices should consult their PIP quarterly payment advices and complete the required activities by 30 April. To receive the annual QPI payment in May each year, practices must also make sure that the NPS is advised that the required activities have been completed by 30 April. To make sure that payments are accurately calculated, it is important that practice GPs provide the NPS with correct details, including provider and prescriber numbers when undertaking a recognised activity. If your practice is not currently in the PIP, you can apply by completing the Practice Incentives Program and General Practice Immunisation Incentive application form.

What are the obligations of the practice?

The practice must:

- check its PIP quarterly payment advice for the expected number of PIP QPI activities that must be completed by 30 April in order to be eligible for the annual May payment
- make sure that practice GPs have provided the NPS with contact information using the relevant forms
- provide accurate information to the NPS on recognised activities undertaken by practice GPs
- make sure Medicare Australia has accurate details of all practice GPs by 30 April each year
- be aware that changes in the number of GPs employed by the practice will impact on the total number of QPI activities to be completed
- be able to substantiate its claim for payments, which may include documentary evidence of the completion of recognised quality prescribing activities undertaken by practice GPs
- provide information to Medicare Australia as part of its ongoing audit program to verify that the practice meets the PIP eligibility requirements

- make sure information provided to Medicare Australia is accurate
- advise Medicare Australia in writing, of any changes to practice arrangements by the relevant 'point in time' date or within 14 calendar days, whichever date is earliest. Refer to the *Practice Incentives Program Guidelines* for more information.

On joining the PIP, the practice must nominate an authorised contact person(s), who will be required to verify on the practice's behalf, any changes to information submitted for PIP claims and payments.

Is there an appeals process?

The PIP has an established appeals process. To request a review of a decision, the authorised contact person or the owners of the practice must write to Medicare Australia within 28 calendar days of the date on the notice of the decision they would like reviewed. Medicare Australia will review its decision and advise the practice in writing of the outcome.

Advice on more avenues of appeal is available from Medicare Australia.

More information

For more information about the PIP Quality Prescribing Incentive email pip@medicareaustralia.gov.au or go to www.medicareaustralia.gov.au/pip or call **1800 222 032** (call charges may apply) between 8.30 am to 5.00 pm Australian Central Standard Time (ACST), Monday to Friday.

These Guidelines are for information purposes only. While it is presently intended that the Commonwealth will make payments as set out in these Guidelines, the making of payments is at the sole discretion of the Commonwealth. The Commonwealth may alter arrangements for the Practice Incentives Program at any time and without notice.

The Commonwealth does not accept any legal liability or responsibility for any injury, loss or damage incurred by the use of, reliance on, or interpretation of the information provided in these Guidelines.