

Pathology

Information Kit

February 2011

General information.....	page 2
Approved Pathology Authorities.....	page 3
Approved Pathology Practitioners.....	page 4
Accredited Pathology Laboratories.....	page 5
Approved Collection Centres.....	page 6
Approval of Pathology Request forms.....	page 7
Specimen Collection Point Identification Numbers.....	page 8

General Information

Under the *Health Insurance Act 1973* (the Act) certain approved administrative arrangements must be in place before Medicare benefits can be paid for a pathology service (other than a prescribed pathology service). A Medicare benefit is payable in respect of a pathology service if:

- ❖ the service was rendered by or on behalf of an **Approved Pathology Practitioner (APP)**;
- ❖ the service was rendered in an **Accredited Pathology Laboratory (APL)** and was a service for which the laboratory was accredited;
- ❖ the proprietor of the laboratory was an **Approved Pathology Authority (APA)** and there was no other proprietor of the laboratory;
- ❖ the service was rendered in the laboratory EITHER by an APP who is proprietor of the laboratory OR by an APP under agreement between the APP by whom or on whose behalf the service was rendered and the proprietor of the laboratory.
- ❖ the service was rendered following a request made to the APP by the requesting practitioner or another APP.

The Pathology Section of Medicare Australia provides administrative functions associated with the above. The Pathology Section may be contacted for the following:

- ❖ acceptance of APA Undertakings;
- ❖ acceptance of APP Undertakings;
- ❖ accreditation of pathology laboratories (APL);
- ❖ approval of eligible collection centres;
- ❖ linking provider numbers to specific laboratories.

For further information please contact the Pathology Registration team on 03 9605 7013 or email vic.provider.liaison@medicareaustralia.gov.au.

Approved Pathology Authorities

To become an Approved Pathology Authority (APA) it is necessary to submit an **application** and **undertaking** and have the undertaking accepted by the Minister and pay the prescribed **fee**. An undertaking is accepted for not more than a year. Lodgement of a further application and undertaking must be before the expiry of the previous undertaking to avoid any gap in eligibility for payment of Medicare benefits.

Subject to certain criteria provision exists for backdating the acceptance of a renewal undertaking, for a period up to one month from the expiry of the previous undertaking.

Application and Undertaking forms are available from and should be returned to:-

Medicare Australia
Provider Liaison Section
GPO Box 9822
MELBOURNE VIC 3001

It is important that applicants read the *Instructions and Guide to your application* section at the front of the application document. This section will assist you in completing the APA Application and Undertaking. Failure to answer questions correctly may delay the processing of an application.

The current prescribed **fee** of \$1500 is not payable until the undertaking is accepted by the Minister. The acceptance fee **must** be paid within 14 days of notice of acceptance, otherwise acceptance of the undertaking will lapse automatically. There is no discretion for extensions.

Approved Pathology Practitioners

To become an Approved Pathology Practitioner (APP) it is necessary to submit an **application** and **undertaking** and have the undertaking accepted by the Minister and pay the prescribed **fee**. An undertaking is accepted for not more than a year. Lodgement of a further application and undertaking must be made before expiry of the previous undertaking, to avoid any gap in eligibility for payment of Medicare benefits.

Subject to certain criteria provision exists for backdating the acceptance of a renewal undertaking, for a period up to one month from the expiry of the previous undertaking.

Application and undertaking forms are available from and should be returned to:

Medicare Australia
Provider Liaison Section
GPO Box 9822
MELBOURNE VIC 3001

It is important applicants read the *Instructions and Guide to your application* section at the front of the application document. This information will help complete the APP application and undertaking. Failure to answer questions correctly may delay the processing of an application.

The current prescribed **fee** of \$500 is not payable until the undertaking has been accepted by the Minister. The acceptance fee **must** be paid within 14 days of notice of acceptance; otherwise acceptance of the undertaking will lapse automatically. There is no discretion for extensions.

Accredited Pathology Laboratories

Section 16A (2)(b) of the *Health Insurance Act 1973* (the Act) requires a pathology service to be provided in an Accredited Pathology Laboratory (APL) in order to obtain Medicare benefits for pathology services.

People may apply to have premises approved in accordance with Section 23DN of the Act.

Application forms may be obtained from and returned to:

Medicare Australia
Provider Liaison Section
GPO Box 9822
MELBOURNE VIC 3001

Accreditation fee

An accreditation fee is not payable until the application has been approved in principle. When this has been granted by the delegate, the Medicare Australia notifies the applicant seeking the required payment. Only upon receipt of this fee can the delegate finalise approval of the premises. Should you choose to forward the accreditation fee with the application, the payment will be held by the Medicare Australia pending approval in principle. If the approval in principle is not granted, the payment will be returned to the applicant.

The current prescribed **fees** are:

❖ Category GX	\$2500
❖ Category GY	\$2000
❖ Category B	\$1500
❖ Category M and S	\$750

Laboratory categories

A full description of the laboratory categories and supervision requirements may be found in the Health Insurance (Accredited Pathology Laboratories – Approval Principles 2002). A summary of the laboratory categories for which approval is sought are found on the cover sheet of the APL application form.

Laboratory inspections – All states

People seeking to have premises approved as Accredited Pathology Laboratories (APL) must arrange for an inspection of premises by an external inspection agency. Medicare Australia currently has contracted National Association of Testing Authorities (NATA) to perform inspections. **All** APAs should contact NATA on 02 9736 8222 or 03 9329 1633.

Approved Collection Centres

In order to receive Medicare benefits for pathology services rendered on specimens obtained in a collection centre, the centre must be approved.

APAs must submit a completed application form to Medicare Australia detailing the location of the premises and the owner or lessor. The staff working at the centre must be employed by the APA.

Applications and enquires should be directed to:

Medicare Australia
Provider Liaison Section
GPO Box 9822
MELBOURNE VIC 3001

Approval of Pathology Request Forms

Pathology request forms and combined pathology request/offer to assign forms which are prepared by APP's and/or APA's and distributed to requesting practitioners **are no longer** approved by Medicare Australia.

The minimum details that pre printed pathology request forms and combined pathology request/offer to assign forms must contain for purposes of a subsequent Medicare claim are published in the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS), which is available at the URL below. You need to download the July 2009 MBS, select the PDF version of Category 6 - Pathology Services and then refer to P.2.2 (pages 33 and 34).

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/mbsonline/publishing.nsf/Content/Medicare-Benefits-Schedule-MBS-1>

Specimen Collection Point Identification Numbers

For an APA to be eligible to claim Medicare Benefits, every claim submitted by an APA will have to contain a specimen collection point number. The identification number may be one of four types:

- I. An Approved Collection Centre identification number;
- II. A Recognised Hospital Collection Point identification number;
- III. An identification number for each initiative for Hospital outreach services for privately insured patients; or
- IV. A miscellaneous number (A01) assigned to all other collections not covered by any of the above points.

Except for the miscellaneous number, these identification numbers need to be applied for.