

# GENERAL PREAMBLE TO THE PAYMENT SCHEDULE

## A. 1. PURPOSE OF THE GENERAL PREAMBLE

The General Preamble to the Medical Services Commission (MSC) Payment Schedule (the “Schedule”) complements the specialty preambles in the Schedule. The intention is that, together, the preambles assist medical practitioners in appropriate billing for insured services. Not every specialty requires a specific preamble; several are governed exclusively by the General Preamble. Every effort has been made to avoid confusion in the structure and language of the preambles; if, however, there is an inadvertent conflict between a fee item description, a specialty preamble and the General Preamble, the interpretation of the fee item description and/or the specialty preamble shall prevail.

The Schedule is the list of fees approved by the MSC and payable to physicians for insured medical services provided to beneficiaries enrolled with the Medical Services Plan (MSP). The preambles provide the billing rules under which the fees are to be claimed; these rules are a roadmap designed to clarify the use of the Schedule.

## A. 2. INTRODUCTION TO THE GENERAL PREAMBLE

All benefits listed in the Schedule, except where specific exceptions are identified, must include the following as part of the service being claimed; payment for these inherent components is included in the listed fees:

- i) Direct face-to-face encounter with the patient by the medical practitioner, appropriate physical examination when pertinent to the service and on-going monitoring of the patient’s condition during the encounter, where indicated.
- ii) Any inquiry of the patient or other source, including review of medical records, necessary to arrive at an opinion as to the nature and/or history of the patient’s condition.
- iii) Appropriate care for the patient’s condition, as specifically listed in the Schedule for the service and as traditionally and/or historically expected for the service rendered.
- iv) Arranging for any related assessments, procedures and/or therapy as may be appropriate, and interpreting the results, except where separate listings are applicable to these adjunctive services. (Note: This does not preclude medical practitioners rendering referred “diagnostic facility” services from billing for interpretation of diagnostic test results).
- v) Arranging for any follow-up care which may be appropriate.
- vi) Discussion with and providing advice and information to the patient or the patient’s representative(s) regarding the patient’s condition and recommended therapy, including advice as to the results of any related assessments, procedures and/or therapy which may have been arranged. No additional claims may be made to the Plan for such advice and discussion, nor for the provision of prescriptions and/or laboratory requisitions, unless the patient’s medical condition indicates that the patient should be seen and assessed again by the medical practitioner in order to receive such advice.
- vii) Making and maintaining an adequate medical record of the encounter that appropriately supports the service being claimed. A service for which an adequate medical record has not been recorded and retained is considered not to be complete and is not a benefit under the Plan.

The General Preamble is divided into four interdependent sections:

- B. Definitions
- C. Administrative Items
- D. Types of Services

## **B. DEFINITIONS**

Please note that definitions of specific types of medical assessments and services are provided in the corresponding section of the General Preamble.

### **“Age categories”**

Premature Baby	-2,500 grams or less at birth
Newborn or Neonate	-from birth up to, and including, 27 days of age
Infant	-from 28 days up to, and including, 12 months of age
Child	-from 1 year up to, and including, 15 years of age

Note: for pediatric specialists – up to and including 19 years of age

### **“Antenatal visit”**

Pregnancy-related visits from the time of confirmation of pregnancy to delivery  
Same as prenatal

### **“CPSBC”**

College of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia

### **“Emergency department physician”**

Either a medical practitioner who is a specialist in emergency medicine or a medical practitioner who is physically and continuously present in the Emergency Department or its environs for a scheduled, designated period of time

### **“General practitioner”**

A medical practitioner who is registered with the College of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia as a General Practitioner

### **“Health care practitioner”**

Any of the following persons entitled to practice under an enactment:

- a) a chiropractor
- b) a dentist
- c) an optometrist
- d) a podiatrist
- e) a midwife
- f) a nurse practitioner
- g) a physical therapist
- h) a massage therapist
- i) a naturopathic physician or
- j) an acupuncturist

### **“Holiday”**

New Year’s Day, Family Day, Good Friday, Easter Monday, Victoria Day, Canada Day, B.C. Day, Labour Day, Thanksgiving Day, Remembrance Day, Christmas Day, Boxing Day

The list of dates designated as statutory holidays will be issued annually by MSP

## **“Hospital”**

An institution designated as a hospital under Section 1 of the BC Hospital Act - except in Parts 2 and 2.1, means a non-profit institution that has been designated as a hospital by the minister and is operated primarily for the reception and treatment of persons:

- a) suffering from the acute phase of illness or disability,
- b) convalescing from or being rehabilitated after acute illness or injury, or
- c) requiring extended care at a higher level than that generally provided in a private hospital licensed under Part 2.

## **“Medical practitioner”**

A medical practitioner as entitled to practice under the Medical Practitioners Regulations to the Health Professions Act;

## **“Microsurgery”**

Surgery for which a significant portion of the procedure is done using an operating microscope for magnification. Magnification by other than an operating microscope is not microsurgery

## **“MSC”**

Medical Services Commission: A statutory body, reporting to the Minister, consisting of 9 members appointed by the Lieutenant Governor in Council as follows:

- a) 3 members appointed from among 3 or more persons nominated by the British Columbia Medical Association;
- b) 3 members appointed on the joint recommendation of the minister and the British Columbia Medical Association to represent beneficiaries;
- c) 3 members appointed to represent the government.

See Preamble C. 2. for additional details

## **“MSP”**

Medical Services Plan

## **“No charge referral”**

Notifying MSP of a referral is usually done by including the practitioner number of the physician to who the patient is being referred on your FFS claim. If no FFS claim is being submitted, a “no charge referral” is a claim submitted to MSP under fee item 03333 with a zero dollar amount.

## **“Palliative care”**

Care provided to a terminally ill patient during the final 6 months of life, where a decision has been made that there will be no aggressive treatment of the underlying disease, and care is directed to maintaining the comfort of the patient until death occurs

## **“Practitioner”**

- a) a medical practitioner, as defined above, or
- b) a health care practitioner who is registered with the Medical Services Plan;

## “Prefixes to fee codes”

Note: These prefixes to fee services codes should not be submitted when billing

- B designates services included in the visit fee.
- C designates fee items for which it is not required to indicate by letter the need for a certified surgeon to assist at surgery (see fee item T70019).
- G designates listings which are administered through the Claims payment system but are not funded through the medical practitioners' Available Amount.
- P designates fee items approved on a provisional basis and awaiting further review.
- S designates fee items for which a surgical assistant's fee is not payable.
- T designates fee items approved on a temporary basis and awaiting further information.
- V designates general surgery fee items that are exempt from the post-operative general preamble rule (D. 5. 1.). Therefore, fee item P71008 can be billed for post-operative care within the first 14 post-operative days in hospital.
- Y designates office or hospital visit on the same day is billable in addition to the procedure fee.

## “Referral”

- A request from one practitioner to another practitioner to render a service with respect to a specific patient; typically the service is one or more of a consultation, a laboratory procedure, or other diagnostic test, or specific surgical or medical treatment
- Notifying MSP of a referral is usually done by including the practitioner number of the physician to who the patient is being referred on your FFS claim. If no FFS claim is being submitted, a “no charge referral” is a claim submitted to MSP under fee item 03333 with a zero dollar amount
- On occasion, a practitioner's number is not available, for these rare cases the following generic numbers have been established:
  - 99991 – referral by a chiropractor to an orthopaedic specialist
  - 99992 – referral by an optometrist to an ophthalmologist and referral by an optometrist to a neurologist
  - 99993 – referral by a salaried, sessional or contract physician
  - 99994 – referral by a dentist
  - 99996 – referred by public health for a TB x-ray
  - 99997 – referred by a primary care organization
  - 99998 – referred by an Out of Province physician

Note: A record of the referral must be retained in the patient's clinical record.

## “Specialist”

A medical practitioner who is a Certificant or a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada; and/or be so recognized by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia in that particular specialty.

## “Third party”

A person or organization other than the patient, his/her agent, or MSP that is requesting and/or assuming financial responsibility for a medical or medically related service

### **“Transferral”**

The transfer of responsibility from one medical practitioner to another for the care of patient, temporarily or permanently.

This is distinguished from a referral, and does not provide the basis for billing a consultation; the exception is that, when the complexity or severity of illness necessitates that accepting the transferral requires an initial chart review and physical examination, a limited or full consultation may be medically necessary and is requested by the transferring medical practitioner.

### **“Time categories”**

- 12-month period – any period of twelve consecutive months
- Calendar year – the period from January 1 to December 31
- Day – a calendar day
- Fiscal year – from April 1 of one year to March 31 of the following year
- Month – a calendar month
- Week – any period of 7 consecutive days
- Calendar week – from Sunday to Saturday

### **“Uninsured service”**

- A service that is not a benefit as defined by the MSC

## **C. ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS**

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## **C. ADMINISTRATIVE ITEMS**

### **C. 1. Fees Payable by the Medical Services Plan (MSP)**

A Payment Schedule for medical practitioners is established under Section 26 of the *Medicare Protection Act* and is referred to in the Master Agreement between the Government of the Province of British Columbia and the Medical Services Commission (MSC) and the British Columbia Medical Association (BCMA). The fees listed are the amounts payable by the Medical Services Plan (MSP) of British Columbia for listed benefits. "Benefits" under the Act are limited to services which are medically required for the diagnosis and/or treatment of a patient, which are not excluded by legislation or regulation, and which are rendered personally by medical practitioners or by others delegated to perform them in accordance with the Commission's policies on delegated services.

Services requested or required by a "third party" for other than medical requirements are not insured under MSP. Services such as consultations, laboratory investigations, anesthesiology, surgical assistance, etc., rendered solely in association with other services which are not benefits also are not considered benefits under MSP, except in special circumstances as approved by the Medical Services Commission (e.g.: Dental Anesthesia Policy).

### **C. 2. Setting and Modification of Fees**

The tri-partite Medical Services Commission (MSC) manages the Medical Services Plan (MSP) on behalf of the Government of British Columbia in accordance with the *Medicare Protection Act* and Regulations. The MSC is the body that has the statutory authority to set the fees that are payable for insured medical services provided to beneficiaries enrolled with the Medical Services Plan (MSP). The MSC Payment Schedule is the official list of fees for which insured services are paid by MSP.

The BC Medical Association (BCMA) maintains and publishes the BCMA Guide to Fees. The Guide mirrors the MSC Payment Schedule, with some exceptions including recommended private fees for uninsured services.

The process for additions, deletions or other changes to the MSC Payment Schedule, are made in accordance with the Master Agreement. Medical practitioners who wish to have modifications to the MSC Payment Schedule considered should submit their proposals to the BCMA Tariff Committee through the appropriate Section. The Government and the BCMA have agreed to consult with each other prior to submitting a recommendation to the MSC. If both parties agree, in writing, to a revision, MSC will adopt the recommendation as part of the MSC Payment Schedule as long as the service is medically necessary and consistent with the requirements of the *Medicare Protection Act* and Regulations and it agrees with the estimated projected cost that will result from the revision. In the case where there is no agreement between Government and the BCMA, both parties may make a separate recommendation to the MSC and the MSC will determine the changes, if any, to the MSC Payment Schedule.

Usually, the earliest retroactive effective date that may be established for a new or interim fee code, is April 1st of the current fiscal year. For services not listed in the MSC Payment Schedule, please refer to the following sections C. 3. & C. 4.

### **C. 3. Services Not Listed in the Schedule**

Services not listed in the MSC Payment Schedule must not be billed to MSP under other listings. These services should be billed under the appropriate miscellaneous fee as described in section C. 4.

On recommendation of the BCMA Tariff Committee and agreed to by Government, interim listings may be designated by the MSC for new procedures or other services for a limited period of time to allow definitive listings to be established.

However, prior to establishment of a new or interim fee code, an individual or the section may request special consideration to bill for a medically required service not currently listed by following the procedure under Miscellaneous Services (C. 4.).

#### **C. 4. Miscellaneous Services**

This section relates to services not listed in the MSC Payment Schedule that are:

- new medically necessary services generally considered to be accepted standards of care in the medical community currently and not considered experimental in nature;
- unusually complex procedures, for established but infrequently performed procedures;
- for unlisted “team” procedures, or
- for any medically required service for which the medical practitioner desires independent consideration to be given by MSP

Claims under a miscellaneous fee code will be accepted for adjudication only if the following criteria are fulfilled:

- An estimate of an appropriate fee, with rationale for the level of that fee
- Sufficient documentation of the services (such as the operative report) to substantiate the claim.

The Medical Services Plan will review the fee estimate proposed and the supporting documentation and by comparing with the service provided with comparable services listed in the MSC Payment Schedule, determine the level of compensation. While an application for a new fee item is in process (as per Section C. 2.), MSP will pay for the service at a percentage of a comparable fee until the new fee item is effective. Should it be determined that a new listing will not be established due to the infrequency of the unlisted service, payments will be made at 100% of the comparable service.

#### Miscellaneous (...99) Fee Items

00099	General Services
00199	General Practice
00299	Dermatology
00399	General Internal Medicine
00499	Neurology
00599	Pediatrics
00699	Psychiatry
00999	Diagnostic Procedures
01499	Critical Care
01799	Physical Medicine
01899	Emergency Medicine
01999	Anesthesia
02599	Otolaryngology
02999	Ophthalmology
03999	Neurosurgery
04999	Obstetrics & Gynecology
06999	Plastic Surgery
07999	General Surgery/Cardiac Surgery
08699	X-ray
08899	Miscellaneous Diagnostic Ultrasound
08999	Urology
09899	Nuclear Medicine
30999	Clinical Immunology and Allergy
31999	Rheumatology
32199	Respirology

33199	Cardiology
33299	Endocrinology and Metabolism
33399	Gastroenterology
33499	Geriatric Medicine
33599	Hematology and Oncology
33699	Infectious Diseases
33899	Nephrology
33999	Occupational Medicine
59999	Orthopaedics
77799	Vascular Surgery
79199	Thoracic Surgery
94999	Laboratory Medicine

If a medical practitioner wishes to dispute the adjudication of a claim submitted under a miscellaneous fee, please refer to section C. 12. on Disputed Payments.

### **C. 5. Inclusive Services and Fees**

If it is not medically necessary for a patient to be personally reassessed prior to prescription renewal, specialty referral, release of laboratory results, etc., claims for these services must not be made to MSP regardless of whether or not a medical practitioner chooses to see his/her patients personally or speak with them via the telephone.

Some services listed in the MSC Payment Schedule have fees which are specifically intended to cover multiple services over extended time periods. Examples are most surgical procedures, the critical care per diem listings and some obstetrical listings. The preambles and Schedule are explicit where these intentions occur.

When, because of serious complications or coincidental non-related illness, additional care is required beyond that which would normally be recognized as included in the listed service, MSP will give independent consideration to claims for this additional care, if adequate explanation is submitted with the claim.

### **C. 6. Medical Research**

Costs of medical services (such as examinations by medical practitioners, laboratory procedures, other diagnostic procedures) which are provided solely for the purposes of research or experimentation are not the responsibility of the patient or MSP. However, it is recognized that medical research may involve what is generally considered to be accepted therapies or procedures, and the fact that a therapy or procedure is performed as part of a research study or protocol does not preclude it from being a service insured by MSP. In the situation where therapies or procedures are part of a research study, only those reasonable costs customarily related to routine and accepted care of a patient's problem are considered to be insured by MSP; additional services carried out specifically for the purposes of the research are not the responsibility of MSP.

#### **Experimental Medicine**

New procedures and therapies not performed elsewhere and which involve a radical departure from the customary approaches to a medical problem, are considered to be experimental medicine. Services related to such experimental medicine are not chargeable to MSP.

New therapies and procedures which have been described elsewhere may or may not be deemed to be experimental medicine for the purposes of determining eligibility for payment by MSP.

Until new procedures or therapies are proven by peer-reviewed studies and adopted by the medical community, they are experimental. Services related to such experimental medicine are not the responsibility of the Medical Services Plan.

Coverage:

- Associated costs for any routine follow up care and diagnostic procedures related to experimental medicine are the responsibility of the patient.
- Care related to complications of any treatment, including experimental medicine, is covered by the Medical Services Plan. Care may include direct telephone consultation with physicians as required and clinical services provided directly to patients. Physician claims are billed under existing mechanisms through the Medical Services Plan Fee-for-Service system (see the MSC Payment Schedule for further information).

Process:

Where such a new therapy or procedure is being introduced into British Columbia and the medical practitioners performing the new therapy or procedure wish to have a new fee item inserted in to the fee schedule to cover the new therapy or procedure, the process to be used is as follows:

An application for a new fee item related to the new therapy or procedure will be submitted by the appropriate section(s) of the BCMA to the BCMA Tariff Committee for consideration, with documentation supporting the introduction of this item into the payment schedule. The BCMA Tariff Committee will advise the Medical Services Commission whether or not this new therapy constitutes experimental medicine. If the Tariff Committee considers that the item is experimental, it will not be considered an insured service and will not be introduced into the fee schedule. If the Medical Services Commission, on the advice of Tariff Committee, determines that the new therapy or procedure is not experimental medicine, the fee item application will be handled in the usual manner for a new fee.

When a new therapy or procedure is being performed outside British Columbia, a patient or patient advocate may request that the services associated with this new therapy or procedure be considered insured services by MSP. The situation will be reviewed by the Medical Services Commission utilizing information obtained from various sources, such as medical practitioners, the BCMA or evidence based research. If it is determined that the new therapy or procedure is experimental, then the cost of medical services provided for this type of medical care will not be the responsibility of MSP. If it is considered that the therapy or procedure is not experimental, the cost of medical services associated with this treatment will be in part or in whole the responsibility of MSP.

If the procedures are accepted as no longer being experimental, they may be added into the MSC Payment Schedule, if approved by the MSC after the appropriate review process has been followed (see section C. 3.)

### **C. 7. MSP Billing Number**

A billing number consists of two numbers - a practitioner number and a payment number. The practitioner number identifies the practitioner performing and taking responsibility for the service. The payment number identifies the person or party to whom payment will be directed by the Medical Services Plan (MSP). Each claim submitted must include both a practitioner number and payment number.

### **C. 8. Group Practice, Partnerships, and Locum Tenens**

The *Medicare Protection Act* requires that each medical practitioner will charge for his/her own services. For MSP and WorkSafeBC (WSBC) billings this requires the use of the individual's personal practitioner number. This includes members of Group Practices, Partnerships and Locum Tenens. Non compliance may impact the level of benefits a medical practitioner may accrue under the Benefits Subsidiary Agreement.

Exceptions to this rule are the Laboratory Medicine Facilities, hospital-based Diagnostic Imaging, and where specifically allowed by the MSC.

### **C. 9. Assignment of Payment**

An "Assignment of Payment" is a legal agreement by which an attending practitioner designates payment for his/her services to another party. In this circumstance, the designated party may use the attending practitioner's practitioner number in combination with its own payment number when submitting claims to MSP. To authorize MSP to make payment to a designated party, the attending practitioner must complete and file an "Assignment of Payment" form. However, even though the payment has been assigned, the responsibility for the clinical service and its appropriate billing remains with the practitioner whose practitioner number is used.

### **C. 10. Adequate Medical Records of a Benefit under MSP**

Except for referred "diagnostic facility" services, a medical record is not considered adequate unless it contains all information which may be designated or implied in the MSC Payment Schedule for the service. Another medical practitioner of the same specialty, who is unfamiliar with both the patient and the attending medical practitioner, would be able to readily determine the following from that record at hand:

- a. Date and location of the service.
- b. Identification of the patient and the attending medical practitioner.
- c. Presenting complaint(s) and presenting symptoms and signs, including their history.
- d. All pertinent previous history including pertinent family history.
- e. The relevant results, both negative and positive, of a systematic enquiry pertinent to the patient's problem(s).
- f. Identification of the extent of the physical examination including pertinent positive and negative findings.
- g. Results of any investigations carried out during the encounter.
- h. Summation of the problem and plan of management.

For referred "diagnostic facility" services, an adequate medical record must include:

- a. Date and location of patient encounter or specimen obtained.
- b. Identification of the patient and the referring practitioner.
- c. Problem and/or diagnosis giving rise to the referral where appropriate.
- d. Identification of the specific services requested by the referring practitioner.
- e. Identification of specific services performed but not specifically requested by the referring practitioner, and identification of the medical practitioner who authorized the additional services.
- f. Original requisition or a copy or electronic reproduction of the requisition, in which the method for copying or producing an electronic reproduction must be approved by the Commission, the nature of the copy or electronic reproduction must comply with the intent relative to the form and content of the standard laboratory requisition, and must be auditable to the original source document.
- g. Where a requisition is submitted electronically, the electronic ordering methods must be approved by the Commission employing guidelines established jointly by MSP and BCMA.
- h. Where a written requisition was never submitted by the referring practitioner, the laboratory staff person who recorded the verbal requisition must be identified. The requisitions must be retained for 3 years.
- i. Results of all services rendered, and interpretation where appropriate. These data must be retained for 3 years.

## C. 11. Reciprocal Claims

All Provinces, and Territories, except Quebec, have entered an agreement to pay for insured services provided to residents of other provinces when a patient presents with a valid Provincial Health Registration Card. Claims can be submitted electronically and details of this process may be obtained by contacting MSP. However, the services listed below are exempt from this agreement and should be billed directly to the non-resident patient.

### Medical Practitioner Services Excluded under the Inter-Provincial Agreements for the Reciprocal Processing of Out-of-Province Medical Claims

1. Surgery for alteration of appearance (cosmetic surgery)
2. Gender-reassignment surgery
3. Surgery for reversal of sterilization
4. Therapeutic abortions (Except Yukon residents – BC/Yukon have a standalone agreement)
5. Routine periodic health examinations including routine eye examinations (including PAP tests for screening only)
6. In-vitro fertilization, artificial insemination
7. Acupuncture, acupressure, transcutaneous electro-nerve stimulation (TENS), moxibustion, biofeedback, hypnotherapy
8. Services to persons covered by other agencies; Armed Forces, WorkSafe BC, Department of Veterans Affairs, Correctional Services of Canada (Federal Penitentiaries)
9. Services requested by a “Third Party”
10. Team conference(s)
11. Genetic screening and other genetic investigation, including DNA probes
12. Procedures still in the experimental/developmental phase
13. Anesthetic services and surgical assistant services associated with all of the foregoing.

The services on this list may or may not be reimbursed by the home province. The patient should make enquires of that home province after direct payment to the BC medical practitioner.

## C. 12. Disputed Payments

Remittance statements issued by MSP should be reviewed carefully to reconcile all claims and payments made. Claims may have been adjusted in adjudication and explanatory codes should designate the reason(s) for any adjustments. If a medical practitioner is unable to agree with an adjustment, the account should be resubmitted to MSP together with additional information for reassessment. Further disagreement with the payment should be referred to the BCMA Reference Committee for review and subsequent recommendation to the Commission.

## C. 13. Extra Billing and Balance Billing

“Extra Billing” means billing an amount over the amount payable for an insured service (a “benefit”) by MSP. Extra billing is not allowed under the *Medicare Protection Act* except for services rendered by medical practitioners who are not “enrolled” with MSP (i.e., no services are covered by MSP) and then only for those services which are rendered outside of hospitals and community care facilities.

“Balance billing” denotes the practice of medical practitioners who are opted in under MSP billing MSP for the MSP fee and the patient for the amount of the difference between the payment made by MSP for an insured service and the fee for that service listed in the BCMA Guide to Fees, under the heading “BCMA Fee.” Except as defined by differential billing for non-referred patients above, balance billing is not permitted under the *Medicare Protection Act*.

#### **C. 14. Differential Billing for Non-Referred Patients**

If a specialist attends a patient without referral from another practitioner authorized by the Medical Services Commission to make such referral, the specialist may submit a claim to MSP for the appropriate general practitioner visit fee and in addition may charge the patient a differential fee. This is not considered “extra billing.”

The maximum amount the patient may be charged is the difference between the amount payable under the General Practice Payment Schedule for the service rendered, and the amount payable under the Payment Schedule to the specialist had the patient been referred.

#### **C. 15. Missed Appointments**

Claims for missed appointments must not be submitted to MSP. Billing the patient directly for such missed appointments would not be considered extra billing.

#### **C. 16. Payment for Specialist Consultations/Visits and specialty-restricted items**

To be paid by MSP, ICBC or WorkSafeBC for specialist consultations, visit items and/or other specialty-restricted fee items listed in the specialty sections of the Payment Schedule, one must be a Certificant or a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada and/or be so recognized by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia in that particular specialty.

A specialist recognized in more than one specialty by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia should bill consultation and referred items under the specialty most appropriate for the condition being diagnosed and/or treated for that referral/treatment period.

#### **C. 17. Motor Vehicle Accident (MVA) Billing Guidelines**

1. All cases directly relating to an MVA which ICBC Insurance coverage applies should be identified as such by a “yes” code in the Teleplan MVA field.
2. All such cases should be coded “MVA” regardless of whether seen in an office visit, emergency, lab or x-ray facility. Surgery or procedures performed in regard to these cases should also be identified.
3. Where possible, please attach an ICBC claim number to each coded MVA in your Teleplan billing.
4. In cases where a visit or procedure was occasioned by more than one condition, the dominant purpose must be related to an MVA to code it as such.
5. If the patient is from another province, use the normal out-of-province billing process.
6. In those instances in which the patient has no MSP coverage, the medical practitioner should bill the patient or ICBC directly. Medical practitioners have the choice of either billing the uninsured patient directly at the BCMA recommended rate and having the patient recover the costs from ICBC (see BCMA Guide to Fees), or billing ICBC for the MSP amount.
7. If the MVA is work-related, WorkSafeBC (WSBC) should be billed under their procedures.
8. Medical Practitioners are accountable for proper MVA identification and are subject to audit.

#### **C. 18. Guidelines for Payment for Services by Residents and/or Interns**

When patient care is rendered in a clinical teaching unit or other setting for clinical teaching by a health care team, the medical practitioner responsible shall be personally identified to the patient at the earliest possible moment. No fees may be charged in the name of the responsible staff physician for services rendered by an intern or resident prior to the identification taking place. Moreover, the

responsible staff physician must be in the clinical teaching unit and/or immediately available to intervene (immediately available means on-site).

For a medical practitioner who supervises two or more procedures or other services concurrently through the use of residents, interns or other members of the team, total billings must not exceed the amount that a medical practitioner could bill in the same time period in the absence of the other team members. For example:

- a) If an anesthesiologist is supervising two rooms simultaneously, the anesthetic intensity/complexity units should only be billed for one of the two cases.
- b) If a surgeon is operating in one room while his/her resident is operating in a second room, charges should only be made for the case the surgeon performs.
- c) In psychotherapy where direct supervision by the staff physician may distort the psychotherapeutic milieu, the staff physician may claim for psychotherapy when a record of the psychotherapeutic interview is carefully reviewed with the resident and the procedure thus supervised. However, the time charged by the staff physician should not exceed the lesser of the time spent by the resident in the psychotherapeutic interview or the staff physician in the supervision of that interview.
- d) For hospital visits and consultations rendered by the resident in the name of the staff physician, the staff physician should only charge for services on the days when actual supervision of that patient's care takes place through a physical visit to the patient by the staff physician and/or a chart review is conducted with detailed discussion with the other members of the health team.

#### **C. 19. Services to Family and Household Members**

1. Services are not benefits of MSP if a medical practitioner provides them to the following members of the medical practitioner's family:
  - a) a spouse,
  - b) a son or daughter,
  - c) a step-son or step-daughter,
  - d) a parent or step-parent,
  - e) a parent of a spouse,
  - f) a grandparent,
  - g) a grandchild,
  - h) a brother or sister, or
  - i) a spouse of a person referred to in paragraph (b) to (h).
2. Services are not benefits of MSP if a medical practitioner provides them to a member of the same household as the medical practitioner.

#### **C. 20. Delegated Procedures**

Procedures which are generally and traditionally accepted as those which may be carried out by a nurse, nurse practitioner or a medical assistant in the employ of a medical practitioner may, when so performed, only be billed to MSP by the medical practitioner when the performance of the procedure is under the "direct supervision" of the medical practitioner or a designated alternate medical practitioner with equivalent qualifications. Direct supervision requires that during the procedure, the medical practitioner be physically present in the office or clinic at which the service is rendered. While this does not preclude the medical practitioner from being otherwise occupied, s/he must be in personal attendance to ensure that procedures are being performed competently and s/he must at all times be available immediately to improve, modify or otherwise intervene in a procedure as required in the best interest of the patient. Billing for these procedures also implies that the medical practitioner is taking full responsibility for their medical necessity and for their quality. Any exceptions to this rule are subject to the written approval of MSP.

“Procedures” in this context do not include such “visit” type services as examinations/ assessments, consultations, psycho-therapy, counselling, telehealth services, etc., which may not be delegated.

The foregoing limitations do not apply to approved procedures rendered in approved “diagnostic facilities”, as defined under the Medicare Protection Act and Regulations and which are subject to accreditation under the Diagnostic Accreditation Program.

### **C. 21. Diagnostic Facility Services**

Diagnostic Facility Services are defined under the Medicare Protection Act as follows:

“Medically required services performed in accordance with protocols agreed to by the Commission, or on order of the referring practitioner, who is a member of a prescribed category of practitioner, in an approved diagnostic facility by, or under the supervision of, a medical practitioner who has been enrolled, unless the services are determined by the Commission not to be benefits.”

The Medical Services Commission designates, from time to time, certain diagnostic procedures as “diagnostic facility” services under the MSC Payment Schedule. Currently, the following services are considered “diagnostic facility” services for purposes of the MSC Payment Schedule:

- a. the services, studies, or procedures of laboratory medicine, diagnostic radiology, diagnostic ultrasound, nuclear medicine scanning, pulmonary function, computerized axial tomography technical fee (CT, CAT), magnetic resonance imaging (MRI), positron emission tomography (PET), and electro diagnosis (including electrocardiography, electroencephalography, and polysomnography), or
- b. the taking or collecting of specimens in an approved diagnostic facility for the purpose of diagnosis, treatment or prevention of a human ailment. Such services are not payable by MSP for services rendered to hospital in-patients, “day surgery” patients, or emergency department patients.

The venepuncture and dispatch listings in the Payment Schedule (00012 and 90000) apply only to those situations where this sole service is provided by a facility or person unassociated with any other bloodwork services provided to that patient. Fee items 00012 and 90000 cannot be billed or paid to a medical practitioner or a laboratory if any other bloodwork assays are performed or if the specimen is sent to an associated facility.

### **C. 22. Appliances/Prostheses/Orthotics**

The costs of prostheses, orthotics and other appliances are not covered under MSP. Such devices, where insertion in hospital is medically/surgically required and where the devices are embedded entirely within tissue, may be covered under an institutional budget.

### **C. 23. Accompanying Patients**

When it is medically essential that a medical practitioner accompany a patient to a distant hospital, MSP allows payment at the rates listed in the Payment Schedule for the travelling time spent with the patient only. Out-of-office hours premiums may also be applicable in accordance with the guidelines. Payment is based on a return trip and not applicable to layover time. Claims should be submitted with details under fee code 00084. Claims for travel, board and lodging are not payable by MSP. Medical practitioners who accompany a patient who is being transferred will, upon application to the Health Authority, be reimbursed for expenses reasonably incurred during, and necessitated by, the transfer.

### **C. 24. Salaried and Sessional Arrangements**

Fee for Service claims for any physician service(s) that is funded under a service contract, or compensated for under a sessional or salaried payment arrangement, must not be billed to MSP. When physicians who receive compensation under a service contract, sessional payment or salaried

arrangement are billing for an unrelated service, the appropriate location code and facility code should be included on all fee for service claims.

### **C. 25. WorkSafeBC (WSBC)**

A detailed description of WorkSafeBC (WSBC) fees, preamble, and policies is contained in the WorkSafeBC section of the BCMA Guide to Fees. The fees listed under "MSP and WSBC Fee" have been accepted by the WorkSafeBC through negotiated agreements as the basis for their Guide to Fees. WorkSafeBC supplies its own reporting and billing forms. To facilitate payment, WorkSafeBC requires the practitioner to include their MSP payment number on all forms.

MSP is currently processing claims on behalf of WorkSafeBC as its agent. The BCMA and WorkSafeBC agree that MSP Teleplan is the only acceptable manner of billing WorkSafeBC for services billable through MSP.

### **C. 26. BC Transplant Society**

With the exception of medical practitioners paid by the BC Transplant Society under an alternate payment plan, all medical practitioner services associated with cadaveric organ recovery ("organ donation") are payable on a fee-for-service basis through the MSP. For the purpose of payment of these services, the donor's PHN will remain valid after legal brain death until such time as the donor's organs have been successfully harvested. A note record should accompany the account stating "organ donor".

## D. TYPES OF SERVICES

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#### **D. 1. Telehealth Services**

“Telehealth Service” is defined as a medical practitioner delivered health service provided to a patient via live image transmission of those images to a receiving medical practitioner at another approved site, through the use of video technology. "Video technology" means the recording, reproducing and broadcasting of live visual images utilizing a direct interactive video link with a patient. If the sending and/or receiving medical practitioner are not in a Health Authority approved site, the medical practitioner is responsible for the confidentiality and security of all records and transmissions related to the telehealth service. In order for payment to be made, the patient must be in attendance at the sending site at the time of the video capture. Only those services which are designated as telehealth services are payable by MSP. Other services/procedures require face-to-face encounters. Telehealth services do not include teleradiology or tele-ultrasound, which are regulated by their specific Sectional Preambles.

Telehealth services are payable only when provided as defined under the specific Preamble pertaining to the service rendered (e.g.: telehealth consultation - see Preamble D. 2.) to a patient with valid medical coverage. Patients must be informed and given opportunity to agree to services rendered using this modality, without prejudice.

Notwithstanding the above, "telehealth examination" means an examination of a patient by the consultant at the receiving site using "telehealth services" as defined above, but does not include the "face-to-face encounter" requirements referred to under Preamble A. 2.

In those cases where a specialist service requires a general practitioner at the patient's site to assist with the essential physical assessment, without which the specialist service would be ineffective, the specialist must indicate in the "Referred by" field that a request was made for a General Practice assisted assessment.

Where a receiving medical practitioner, after having provided a telehealth consultation service to a patient, decides s/he must examine the patient in person, the medical practitioner should claim the subsequent visit as a limited consultation, unless more than 6 months has passed since the telehealth consultation.

Where a telehealth service is interrupted for technical failure, and is not able to be resumed within a reasonable period of time, and therefore is unable to be completed, the receiving medical practitioner

should submit a claim under the appropriate miscellaneous code for independent consideration with appropriate substantiating information.

Video technology services are generally payable once per patient/per day/per medical practitioner. Any exceptions to this policy must comply with all Payment Schedule criteria for multiple visits. Information regarding the medical necessity and times of service should accompany claims.

Compensation for travel, scheduling and other logistics is the responsibility of the Regional Health Authority. Rural Retention fee-for-service premiums are applicable to telehealth services and are payable based on the location of the receiving medical practitioner in eligible RSA communities.

The College of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia have confirmed that in this province, licensure is defined by the location of the medical practitioner. However, other jurisdictions may have other definitions. BC medical practitioners providing care via telehealth to patients outside the province must abide by the regulations set in the patient's home province.

See the appropriate Section for specific fee items and further criteria.

## **D. 2. Consultation**

### **D. 2. 1. General**

A consultation applies when a medical practitioner, or a health care practitioner (chiropractor, for orthopaedic consultations; midwife, for obstetrical or neonatal related consultations; nurse practitioner; optometrist, for ophthalmology consultations; optometrist, for Neurology consultations for suspected optic neuritis or amaurosis fugax or Aion {anterior ischemic optic neuropathy} or stroke or diplopia; oral/dental surgeon, for diseases of mastication), in the light of his/her professional knowledge of the patient and because of the complexity, obscurity or seriousness of the case, requests the opinion of a medical practitioner competent to give advice in this field.

The referring practitioner is expected to provide the consulting physician with a letter of referral that includes the reason for the request and the relevant background information on the patient. The referring practitioner is also required to notify MSP of the referral by including the practitioner number of the specialist to who the patient is being referred on their associated FFS claim. If no FFS claim is being submitted, a "no charge referral" claim under fee item 03333 is to be sent to MSP.

The service includes the initial services of a consultant necessary to enable him/her to prepare and render a written report, including his/her findings, opinions and recommendations, to the referring practitioner. A consultation must not be claimed unless the attending practitioner specifically requested it, and unless the written report is rendered. It is expected that a written report will be generated by the medical practitioner providing the consultation within 2 weeks of the date-of-service. In exceptional circumstances, when beyond the consultant's control, a delay of up to 4 weeks is acceptable.

Additional criteria apply to certain types of specialty specific consultations. These are described in the Sectional Preambles and/or the notes to the specific fee codes.

### **D. 2. 2. Restrictions**

- i) A consultation for the same diagnosis is not normally payable as a full consultation unless an interval of at least six months has passed since the consultant has last billed a visit or service for the patient. A limited consultation may be payable within the six month interval, if medically necessary and a consultation has been specifically requested.
- ii) For consultations and/or other specialty limited services to be paid by MSP, the medical practitioner rendering the service must be certified by or be a Fellow of the Royal College of Physicians and Surgeons of Canada, and be so recognized by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia. No other specialist qualifications will be recognized by MSP

and payments for visits and examinations rendered by licensed physicians not so qualified will be made on the basis of fees listed in the General Practice Section of this MSC Payment Schedule.

Exceptions to this limitation will only be made in cases of geographic need, as recommended by the College of Physicians and Surgeons of BC.

**D. 2. 3. Limited Consultation**

A limited consultation requires all of the components expected of a full consultation for that specialty but is less demanding and normally requires substantially less of the medical practitioner's time than a full consultation.

It is expected that the limited consultation, when medically necessary and specifically requested, will be billed as part of continuing care, and that a full consultation is not billed simply because of the passage of time.

A new and unrelated diagnosis can be billed as a full consultation without regard to the passage of time since the consultant has last billed any visit or service for the patient.

**D. 2. 4. Special Consultation**

Specific additional conditions may apply to specific types of consultation, as designated in the Preamble to the pertinent section of the MSC Payment Schedule and/or the notes to the specific listings.

**D. 2. 5. Continuing Care by Consultant**

Once a consultation has been rendered and the written report submitted to the referring practitioner, this aspect of the care of the patient normally is returned to the referring practitioner. However, if by mutual agreement between the consultant and the referring practitioner, the complexities of the case are felt to be such that its management should remain for a time in the hands of the consultant, the consultant should claim for continuing care according to the MSC Payment Schedule pertaining to the pertinent specialty.

Where the care of this aspect of the case has been transferred, except for a patient in hospital, the referring practitioner generally should not charge for this aspect of the patient's care unless and until the full responsibility is returned to him/her. For hospitalized patients, supportive care may apply.

Continuing care by a specialist (following consultation) normally is paid at the pertinent specialist rates. However, continuing care requires that a written update of the patient's condition and care be appropriately reported to the referring practitioner at least every six months, until the responsibility for this aspect of the patient's care is returned to the Primary Care practitioner.

**D. 2. 6. Referral and Transferral**

A referral is defined as a request from one practitioner to another practitioner to render a service with respect to a specific patient. Such service usually would be a consultation, a laboratory procedure or other diagnostic test, or specific surgical/medical treatment.

When the medical practitioner to whom a patient has been referred makes further referrals to other medical practitioners, it is the usual practice that the original referring medical practitioner be informed of these further referrals.

A transferral, as distinguished from a referral, involves the transfer of responsibility for the care of the patient temporarily or permanently. Thus, when one medical practitioner is going off call or leaving on

holidays and is unable to continue to treat his/her cases, medical practitioners who are substituting for that medical practitioner should consider that the patients have been temporarily transferred (not referred) to their care.

The medical practitioner to whom a patient has been transferred normally should not bill a consultation for that patient. However, when the complexity or severity of the illness requires that the medical practitioner accepting the transfer reviews the records of the patient and examines the patient, a limited or full consultation may be billed when specifically requested by the transferring medical practitioner.

A new consultation is not allowed when a group of physicians routinely working together provide call for each other.

### **D. 3. Visits and Examinations**

In addition to the general requirements contained in the Introduction to the General Preamble - Section A. 2., the following definitions apply. As well, please note when services are provided for simple education alone, including group education sessions (e.g.: asthma, cardiac rehabilitation and diabetic education) such services are not appropriately claimed under fee-for-service listings.

#### **D. 3. 1. Complete Examination**

- i) A complete physical examination shall include a complete detailed history and physical examination of all parts and systems with special attention to local examination where clinically indicated, adequate record of findings and, if necessary, discussion with patient. The above should include complaints, history of present and past illness, family history, personal history, functional inquiry physical examination, differential diagnosis and provisional diagnosis.
- ii) Routine or periodic complete physical examination (check up) is not a benefit under MSP. This includes any associated diagnostic or laboratory procedures unless significant pathology is found. The physician should advise the laboratory of patient's responsibility for payment.

#### **D. 3. 2. Partial Examination**

A visit for any condition(s) requiring partial examination or history includes both initial and subsequent examination for same or related condition(s). A partial examination includes a history of the presenting complaint(s), appropriate enquiry and examination of the affected part(s), region(s) and/or system(s) as medically required to make a diagnosis, exclude disease and/or assess function.

#### **D. 3. 3. Counselling**

Counselling is defined as the discussion with the patient, caregiver, spouse or relative about a medical condition which is recognized as difficult by the medical profession or over which the patient is having significant emotional distress, including the management of malignant disease. Counselling, to be claimed as such, must not be delegated and must last at least 20 minutes.

Counselling is not to be claimed for advice that is a normal component of any visit or as a substitute for the usual patient examination fee, whether or not the visit is prolonged. For example, the counselling codes must not be used simply because the assessment and/or treatment may take 20 minutes or longer, such as in the case of multiple complaints. The counselling codes are also not intended for activities related to attempting to persuade a patient to alter diet or other lifestyle behavioural patterns. Nor are the counselling codes generally applicable to the explanation of the results of diagnostic tests.

Not only must the condition be recognized as difficult by the medical profession, but the medical practitioner's intervention must of necessity be over and above the advice which would normally be

appropriate for that condition. For example, a medical practitioner may have to use considerable professional skill counselling a patient (or a patient's parent) who has been newly diagnosed as having juvenile diabetes, in order for the family to understand, accept and cope with the implications and emotional problems of this disease and its treatment. In contrast, if simple education alone including group educational sessions (e.g.: asthma, cardiac rehabilitation and diabetic education) is required, such service could not appropriately be claimed under the counselling listings even though the duration of the service was 20 minutes or longer. It would be appropriate to apply for sessional payments for group educational sessions. Unless the patient is having significant difficulty coping, the counselling listings normally would not be applicable to subsequent visits in the treatment of this disease.

Other examples of appropriate claims under the counselling listings are Psychiatric Care, the counselling that may be necessary to treat a significant grief reaction, and conjoint therapy and/or family therapy for significant behavioural problems.

MSP payment of counselling under the counselling listings is limited to four sessions per year per patient unless otherwise specified. Subsequent counselling is payable under the other visit listings. Counselling by telephone is not a benefit under MSP.

#### **D. 3. 4. Group Counselling**

The group counselling fee items found in the General Practice and various specialty sections of the Schedule apply only when two or more patients are provided counselling in a group session lasting 60 minutes or more. The group counselling fee items are not applicable when there is a discussion with the patient in the presence of a caregiver, spouse, or relative when the patient is the only person requiring medical care. In those situations, only the applicable individual counselling fee item could be billed, using the patient's MSP personal health number.

Group counselling fee items are not billable for each person in the group. Claims should be submitted under the Personal Health Number of only one of the beneficiaries, with the names of the other patients attending the session listed in the note record. Only patients with valid MSP coverage should be included. Times should be included with billings for group counselling fee items.

#### **D. 4. Hospital and Institutional Visits**

##### **D. 4. 1. Hospital Admission Examination**

An in-hospital admission examination (fee item 00109) may be claimed when a patient is admitted to an acute care hospital for medical care rendered by a general practitioner. The service also may be applicable when a medical practitioner is required to perform an admission examination prior to a hospital service being delivered by a health care practitioner (e.g.: a dental surgeon). The hospital admission examination listing is not applicable when a patient has been admitted for surgery or when a patient is admitted for care (other than directive care) rendered by a specialist. This service is applicable only once per patient per hospitalization and is in lieu of a "hospital visit" on the day it is rendered. This item is intended to apply in lieu of fee item 00108 on the first in-patient day. However, if extra visits are medically required because of the nature of the problem, 00108 may be billed in addition. An explanation of the reasons for the additional charges should accompany the claim.

This service includes all of the components of a complete examination and may not be claimed if either of these two services has been claimed by this medical practitioner, within the week preceding the patient's admission to hospital. If the MSC Payment Schedule listing for a hospital admission examination is not applicable, the service may be billed under the appropriate "hospital visit" listings.

#### **D. 4. 2. Subsequent Hospital Visit**

A subsequent hospital visit is the routine monitoring and/or examination(s) that are medically required following a patient's admission to an acute care hospital. Payments for subsequent hospital visits are usually limited to one per patient per day for a period up to 30 days. However, it is not the intent of the Schedule that subsequent visit fees be claimed for every day a patient is in hospital unless the visits are medically required and unless a medical practitioner visits the patient each day.

If it is medically required for a patient to be visited more than once per day at any time, or daily beyond the initial 30 day period (e.g.: if the patient is in one of the Intensive Care wards), an explanation should be submitted with the claim and independent consideration will be given.

#### **D. 4. 3. Surgery by a Visiting Doctor**

If a surgeon operates outside of his/her geographical area, (for example as part of an outreach program or other such circumstances), and because of this, s/he is unable to render the usual post-operative care, the medical practitioner who performs this service for the patient may claim for necessary hospital visits at the usual frequency, as described under Preamble D.4.2. Claims for such post-operative care should be accompanied by a written explanation or an electronic note record. No such claims, however, should be made if the hospital at which the post-operative care is being rendered is within the same metropolitan area or within 32 km of the surgeon's home or office.

#### **D. 4. 4. Long-Stay Hospitalization**

For long stays in an acute care hospital including discharge planning and holding units because of serious illness extending beyond 30 days, claims for subsequent hospital visits greater than two visits per patient per week should include an explanation, and will be given independent consideration.

#### **D. 4. 5. Directive Care**

Directive care refers to those subsequent hospital visits rendered by a consultant in cases in which the responsibility for the case remains in the hands of the attending practitioner but for which a consultant is requested by the referring physician to give directive care in hospital during the acute phase. Payments for directive care are limited to two visits per patient per week (Sunday to Saturday), even when there is no interval between visits, for each consultant requested to render directive care by the referring practitioner.

#### **D. 4. 6. Concurrent Care**

For those medical cases where the medical indications are of such complexity that the concurrent services of more than one medical practitioner are required for the adequate care of a patient, subsequent visits should be claimed by each medical practitioner as required for that care. To facilitate payment, claims should be accompanied by an electronic note record, and independent consideration will be given. For patients in I.C.U. or C.C.U. this information in itself is sufficient.

#### **D. 4. 7. Supportive Care**

Where a case has been referred and the referring medical practitioner no longer is in charge of the patient's care but for which continued liaison with the family and/or reassurance of the patient is necessary while the patient is hospitalized, supportive care may be claimed by the referring medical practitioner. Payments for supportive care are limited to one visit for every day of hospitalization for the first ten days and, thereafter, one supportive care visit for every seven days of hospitalization.

#### **D. 4. 8. Newborn Care in Hospital**

Newborn care in hospital is the routine care of a well baby up to 10 days of age and includes an initial complete assessment and examination and all subsequent visits as may be appropriate, including instructions to the parent(s) and/or the patient's representative(s) regarding health care. Newborn well baby care in hospital normally is not payable to more than one medical practitioner for the same patient. However, when a well baby is transferred to another hospital (because of the mother's state of health), separate claims for newborn care when rendered by a different medical practitioner at each hospital may be made.

#### **D. 4. 9. Long-Term-Care Institution Visits**

When visits are required to patients in long-term-care institutions (such as nursing homes, intermediate care facilities, extended care units, rehabilitation facilities, chronic care facilities, convalescent care facilities and personal care facilities, whether or not any of these facilities are situated on the campus of an acute care facility) claims may be made to a maximum of one visit every two weeks. It is not sufficient, however, for the medical practitioner simply to review the patient's chart. A face-to-face patient/medical practitioner encounter must be made. For acute concurrent illnesses or exacerbation of original illness requiring institutional visits beyond the foregoing limitations, additional institutional visits may be claimed with accompanying written explanation.

#### **D. 4. 10. Palliative Care**

The Palliative Care listings are applicable to the visits for palliative care rendered to terminally ill patients suffering from malignant disease or AIDS, or end-stage respiratory, cardiac, liver and renal disease and end-stage dementia with life expectancy of up to 6 months. These listings only apply where aggressive treatment of the underlying disease process is no longer taking place and care is directed instead to maintaining the comfort of the patient until death occurs.

Claims for these listings should be billed continuously from time of determination of patient's palliative status, for a period not to exceed 180 days prior to death. Under extenuating circumstances palliative listings billed beyond 180 days will be given independent consideration upon receipt of an explanatory note record.

The listings are applicable to patients in acute care hospitals, hospice facilities or other institutions whether or not the patient is in a designated palliative care unit. The palliative care listings do not apply when unexpected death occurs after long hospitalization for a diagnosis unrelated to the cause of death.

#### **D. 4. 11. Sub Acute Care**

Sub acute care is payable twice per week under fee items 00108, 13008. If more services or concurrent care is required an explanatory note record should accompany the claim submission. Independent consideration will be given to these claims.

#### **D. 4. 12. Emergency Department Examinations**

Emergency department examinations are designated by various intensity levels of emergency department care. These fee codes apply only to those circumstances where either specialists in emergency medicine or other medical practitioners are physically and continuously present in the Emergency Department or its environs for an arranged designated period of time. For complete details, please refer to the Emergency Medicine section of the MSC Payment Schedule.

#### **D. 4. 13. House Calls**

- i) A house call is considered necessary and may be billed only when the patient cannot practically attend a physician's office due to a significant medical or physical disability or debility and the patient's complaint indicates a serious or potentially serious medical problem that requires a medical practitioner's attendance in order to determine appropriate management;
- ii) A house call may be initiated by the patient, the patient's advocate, or the physician when planned proactive care is determined to be medically necessary to manage the patient's condition;
- iii) If a house call is determined to be necessary and is rendered any day of the week between 0800 and 2300 hours, the house call should be billed as a home visit (use 00103);
- iv) If the house call is initiated and rendered between 2300 and 0800 hours, the visit may be billed as an out-of-office visit with the night call-out charge (01201).
- v) A house call provided for patient convenience should be billed as an out-of-office visit (12200, 13200, 15200, 16200, 17200 or 18200) without a service charge;
- vi) The above also applies to house calls rendered by medical practitioners taking call for other medical practitioners;
- vii) As practicality dictates, the necessity and detail and the time of the call should be documented in the patient's clinical record.

#### **D. 5. Surgery**

##### **D. 5. 1. General**

The fees for surgery, unless otherwise specifically indicated, include the surgical procedure itself and in-hospital post-operative follow-up, including removal of sutures and care of the operative wound by the surgeon or associate. Unless otherwise specifically indicated, the normal post-operative period included in the surgical fee is 14 days and the surgery fees include all concomitant services necessary to perform the listed service (including preparation of the operative site, incision, exploration, review of the results of diagnostic services rendered during the surgery, closure, and pre and post-operative discussion with the patient and/or patient's family).

When unusual circumstances require that additional medical services are provided in the in-hospital 14 days following a surgical procedure over and above the concomitant services necessary to perform the operative procedure, the additional services performed are not part of the inclusive fee for the surgical procedure and may be billed separately. A note record is required.

##### **D. 5. 2. Operation Only**

For listings designated "operation only" the in-hospital, 14 day post-operative visits may be claimed in addition to the surgical procedure, with the exception of the visit(s) made on the day of the procedure.

##### **D. 5. 3. Multiple Surgical Procedures**

- i) When two or more similar procedures (including bilateral procedures) are performed under the same anesthetic, or when two or more procedures are performed in the same general area, whether through the same incision, an extension of that incision or through separate incisions, the procedure with the greater listed fee may be claimed in full and the fees for the additional procedure are reduced to 50 percent, unless otherwise indicated by the Schedule.

However, additional incidental surgery performed en passant (i.e. surgery which would not have been performed in the absence of the primary procedure, such as an appendectomy during abdominal surgery, or incidental cystectomy during gynecological surgery) is considered to be included in the fee for the planned procedure and may not be charged.

- ii) When two or more different procedures are performed through separate incisions under the same anesthetic, and repositioning or redraping of the patient or more than one separately draped surgical operating field is medically/surgically required (because of the nature of the procedure and/or the safety of the patient), the procedure with the greater listed fee may be claimed in full and the fees for the additional such procedures are reduced to 75 percent, unless otherwise indicated by the Payment Schedule.
- iii) Procedures which are listed as "extra" in the Payment Schedule may be claimed at the full listed fee even when performed with other surgical procedures, unless otherwise indicated in the Payment Schedule.
- iv) When two procedures are performed under the same anesthetic by two surgeons and both procedures are or should be within the competence of either one of the operators within the specialty or specialities, the total surgical fee claimed should be no more than that which would be payable if both procedures had been performed by one surgeon, plus one assistant's fee.
- v) Except where team fees are specifically listed in the Payment Schedule or where a team fee reasonably could be expected to apply, when two procedures are performed under the same anesthetic by two surgeons whose different specialty skills are required to perform both procedures, each surgeon may claim his/her specific services as if they were performed in isolation from the other surgeon. These surgeons are not eligible for assistant fees for assisting each other, however, unless each of the surgical procedures takes place consecutively instead of concurrently.
- vi) Where a surgical procedure is performed in stages under separate anesthetics and where there is no specific staged procedure listing in the Payment Schedule, the maximum fee applicable to the complete procedure is 150 percent of the listed fee. However, for emergency surgery followed by a definitive surgical procedure for the same problem (e.g.: cholecystostomy followed by cholecystectomy at a later date) each procedure may be claimed at the full listed fee.
- vii) Surgical procedures which are abandoned before completion will be given independent consideration and paid in accordance with the services performed.
- viii) Additional surgery performed to correct an intra-operative injury(ies) which result from the complicated nature of the disease or significant pathology may be billed at 50%. When submitting a claim for a repair of an intra-operative injury, it must be supported by an explanation in a note record or an operative report. If the repair is performed by another surgeon, it may be billed at 100%.

**D. 5. 4. Surgical Assist**

- i) Time, for the purposes of fee codes 00193, 00198, 07920, T70019 and T70020 is calculated at the earliest time of medical practitioner/patient contact in the operating suite.
- ii) Where a medical practitioner renders surgical assistance at two operations under the same anesthetic but for which repositioning or redraping of the patient or more than one separately draped surgical operating field is medically/surgically required, separate assistants' fees may be claimed for each operation, except for bilateral procedures, procedures within the same body cavity, or procedures on the same limb.
- iii) If, in the interest of the patient, the referring medical practitioner is requested by the patient or the surgeon to attend but does not assist at the procedure, attendance at surgery may be claimed as a subsequent hospital visit.
- iv) The specialist's assistant listings apply only to surgical procedures having unusual technical

difficulties identified and documented by the primary surgeon **in a detailed note record** as necessitating the services of a certified surgical assistant. The general assistant listings are applicable to all other situations where surgical assistance is necessary. (Also see Preamble B. Definitions, Prefixes to Fee Codes).

- v) Where surgery is abandoned, independent consideration will be given to the fee applicable to the assistant, to a maximum of 50 percent of the listed assistant fee for the intended procedure.

#### **D. 5. 5. Cosmetic Surgery**

The guidelines for MSP coverage of surgery for alteration of appearance are listed under Preamble D. 9. For cosmetic surgery not covered by MSP, the anesthetic and assistants' fees also are not covered. In addition, hospitalization charges are not insured for cosmetic surgical procedures not covered by MSP.

#### **D. 6. Fractures and Other Trauma**

- a. When multiple procedures for multiple fractures and/or soft tissue injuries are done by the same surgeon, through different incisions, the largest fee should be charged at 100% and all subsequent fees at 75%. In cases of dissociated injuries for which the presence of one impedes the progress of another, or in the case of multiple major fractures (e.g.: a fractured femur and tibia in the same limb), a full fee for each (to a maximum of 3) may be charged provided that adequate clinical evidence to support this charge is rendered with the account.
- b. Open (compound) fractures: primary wound management fee(s) may be charged in addition to the fracture fee and will be paid at the same percentage as applies to the fracture fees. These wound management fee items are exempt from the 14 day rule (D.5.1). Secondary wound management fees may also be charged and are exempt from the 14 day rule (D.5.1). These primary and secondary Wound Management fees are only applicable where fee items have been designated in a section's schedule of fees for specific open fractures or specified primary or secondary wound management of fractures.
- c. Open reduction of fracture or dislocation when necessary - 50% extra may be charged if a fee for open reduction is not listed.
- d. All casts and plaster-moulded splints may be charged in full in addition to the procedure and visit fees, except that cast or plaster-moulded splint applied at the time of the initial procedure. In cases where a cast or plaster-moulded splint application or alteration is the sole purpose of a visit, a visit fee is not chargeable. Fees for application of casts or plaster-moulded splints are payable only when performed by the medical practitioner.
- e. Open reduction of old malunited fracture - may be billed at an additional 25% of the listed fee unless a specific fee item exists.
- f. External Skeletal Fixation with closed reduction - may be billed at an additional 25% of the listed fee unless a specific fee item exists.

#### **D. 7. Diagnostic and Selected Therapeutic Procedures**

- The listings under the "Diagnostic Procedures and Selected Therapeutic Procedures" section of the MSC Payment Schedule may be claimed in addition to a consultation or other assessment/visit, when performed during that visit.

If, however, the procedure takes place on a subsequent visit arranged to perform the procedure, then that visit may not be claimed in addition to the procedure unless the fee code for the latter is prefixed by the letter "Y".

A subsequent visit fee will be paid in addition to the procedure if more than thirty (30) days has elapsed between the initial visit or service and the diagnostic procedure.

- b. Diagnostic procedures may be claimed in addition to surgical procedures, when applicable.
- c. For multiple diagnostic procedures performed at the same sitting, the procedure having the largest fee may be claimed in full and the remaining procedure(s) at 50 percent of the listed fee(s), unless otherwise specifically indicated in the Payment Schedule.
- d. When two diagnostic/therapeutic procedures are performed by separate medical practitioners at the same sitting and both procedures are or should be within the competence of either medical practitioner, the total fee claimed should be no greater than that which would be payable if both procedures had been performed by one medical practitioner, plus one assistant's fee (if applicable).
- e. When a medical practitioner performs a diagnostic procedure, s/he must be allowed to appropriately perform a full or limited consultation for which s/he charges and is paid, regardless of what consultations and procedures have been performed by other specialists or sub-specialists. The consultation would require a written report in addition to the report of the diagnostic procedure.

If the diagnostic procedure is done on an initial visit, and the initial visit is for the specific purpose of performing the diagnostic procedure, and this visit occurs on an out-patient basis in a procedure facility (including endoscopy suites and cardiac catheterization suites), then a limited consultation would normally be billed rather than a full consultation.

- f. Procedures designated as "extra" will be paid at 100 percent for the first "extra" and 50 percent for any additional procedures designated as "extra". Should all procedures be designated as "extra" then the first procedure will be deemed a regular procedure and payment for the first subsequent "extra" will be at 100 percent and all others at 50 percent.

#### **D. 8. Minor Diagnostic and Therapeutic Procedures**

- a. Minor Diagnostic and Therapeutic Procedures are defined as procedures which have a fee value that is less than that of the office visit. .

Note: To determine the service with the greatest value when a tray fee is applicable, the amount of the tray fee will be added to the value of the procedure fee in the calculation process.

- b. When minor diagnostic or therapeutic procedures are performed in conjunction with an assessment/visit (not a consultation) either the visit or the procedure may be claimed, but not both. Includes fee items identified as "isolated procedures".
- c. When the performance of a minor diagnostic or therapeutic procedure is the primary purpose of the visit (excluding home visits), the fee listed for the procedure includes the associated assessment.
- d. If in the course of a visit for a specific complaint, one or more procedures are performed which are unrelated to the purpose of the visit (e.g.: URI and laceration repair), the service having the largest fee may be claimed in full and the remaining service(s) at 50 percent of the listed fee(s), unless otherwise specifically indicated in the MSC Payment Schedule.
- e. For two or more minor diagnostic or therapeutic procedures listed in the "General Services" section of the Payment Schedule and performed together at the same sitting, each applicable fee may be claimed in full.

## **D. 9. Surgery for Alteration of Appearance**

### **D. 9. 1. General**

- a. Surgery to alleviate significant physical symptoms or to restore or improve function to any area altered by disease, trauma or congenital deformity normally is a benefit under MSP. Surgery solely to alter or restore appearance is not a benefit of MSP except under the circumstances listed in the following policy.
- b. In establishing this policy, it has been recognized that:
  - peer acceptance in our society often is influenced disproportionately by the face,
  - children are especially susceptible to emotional trauma caused by physical appearances,
  - some procedures traditionally have been accepted as benefits of Health Insurance Plans in spite of the obvious cosmetic nature of these procedures.
- c. Emotional, psychological or psychiatric grounds are not considered sufficient reason for MSP coverage of surgery for alteration of appearance except in children and under exceptional circumstances in adults.

On request of the attending medical practitioner, exceptions may be made on an independent consideration basis if the proposed surgery is to alter a significant defect in appearance caused by disease, trauma or congenital deformity, and if the surgery is essential to obtain employment as documented by the attending physician and by an employer with regard to a specific job.

- d. Surgery to revise or remove features of physical appearance which are familial in nature is not a benefit of MSP.
- e. Within the context of this policy, the word "disease" does not include the normal sequelae of aging. Surgery to alter changes in appearance caused by aging is not a benefit of MSP.
- f. Within the context of this policy, the word "trauma" includes trauma due to treatment such as surgery, radiation, etc.
- g. As the phrase "reasonable period of convalescence" is imprecise, independent consideration will be given to more complex cases or extenuating circumstances.
- h. Authorization from MSP is not required for all surgery to alter appearance. It is required only for those categories of procedures for which some cases may not be a benefit under MSP policy.
- i. Authorization required and obtained remains valid for a period of up to two years, after which a new authorization will be required.

Where authorization has been denied or has not been obtained when required for a surgical procedure, the associated consultations, anesthesiology and surgical assistance also are not covered by MSP. Hospitalization costs also will remain the patient's responsibility.

### **D. 9. 2. Surface Pathology**

#### **D. 9. 2. 1. Trauma Scars**

- a. **Neck or Face**
  - Includes non-hair bearing areas of the scalp.
  - Repair of all significant and unsightly such scars, including acne scars, is a benefit of MSP.

- Repair procedures will depend upon the lesion but may include excision, revision, dermabrasion, etc. Rhytidectomy procedures to remove scar prominence, however, are not a benefit of MSP.
- Implantation of collagen, etc. to restore contour, or chemical abrasion to reduce hyperpigmentation are not benefits of MSP except in those rare cases where the pitting or the pigmentation is so severe that a generally acceptable result would not be possible without these procedures.
- MSP authorization for repair of such scars is required.

**b. Scars in other Anatomical Areas**

- Repair of scars which interfere with function or which are significantly symptomatic (pain, local irritation, etc.) is a benefit of MSP.
- Scars with no significant symptoms or functional interference:
  - (i) Repair is a benefit if such repair is carried out within a reasonable period of convalescence, or is part of a pre-planned post-traumatic (including post surgical) staged process. MSP notification must be included as part of the planning process in the latter case.
  - (ii) Other post-traumatic scar revision is not a benefit of MSP.
  - (iii) Revision of acne scars other than on the face or neck is not a benefit of MSP.
- MSP authorization is required for all scar repair procedures.

**D. 9. 2. 2. Keloids and Hypertrophic Scars**

**a. Head or Neck**

- The repair of all significant and unsightly scars, such as keloids, is a benefit of MSP.
- Repair procedures may include excision and/or injection.

**b. Excision of keloids in other areas**

- Not a benefit of MSP unless significantly symptomatic or there is functional impairment.

**D. 9. 2. 3. Tattoos**

**a. Face and Neck**

- Excision or destruction of all significant and unsightly tattoos is a benefit of MSP
- Authorization is not required, but adjudication of repair procedures will be identical to that for scars in these areas.

**b. Other Anatomical Areas**

- Normally not a benefit of MSP

**D. 9. 2. 4. Benign Skin Lesions**

Surgical, physical or chemical removal of benign lesions of the skin, including that done by dermabrasion or chemical peel, unless the diagnosis is specifically defined as an approved indication, in article D. 9. 2. 4. a. is not a benefit of MSP.

Examples of benign lesions that are not insured include but are not limited to the following: benign naevi, seborrheic keratosis, common warts (verrucae), lipomata, uncomplicated benign dermal and/or epidermal cysts, telangiectasias and angiomas of the skin, skin tags, acrochordons, fibroepithelial polyps, papillomata, neurofibromata, dermatofibromata.

a. **Exceptions**

Destructive therapies of benign skin lesions are insured services when the treatment is medically necessary. Examples of medical necessity include but are not limited to the following indications:

- genital warts (condylomata acuminata)
  - plantar warts
  - viral induced cutaneous tumours in the immune compromised patient
  - inflamed dermal and epidermal cyst
  - dysplastic naevi
  - lentigo maligna
  - congenital naevi
  - actinic (solar) keratosis
  - atypical pigmented naevi
  - lesions which cause significant pathophysiologic dysfunction
- b. When a patient presents with a surface pathology, the initial visit and or consultation and/or pathologic examination of a tissue specimen, when one is submitted, is regarded as medically necessary to establish the diagnosis, and therefore, is an insured service.

**D. 9. 2. 5. Hair Loss**

a. **Scalp or Neck**

- (i) Post-traumatic:
- Repair to the area of traumatic hair loss is a benefit of MSP only if carried out within a reasonable period of convalescence.
  - MSP authorization is required.
- (ii) Other Etiology:
- Not a benefit of MSP
- (iii) Usual repair procedures may include skin shifts or flaps, skin grafts, or hair plugs.

b. **Other Anatomical Areas**

- Not a benefit of MSP

**D. 9. 2. 6. Epilation of Hair**

a. **Face**

- This procedure, when done for alteration of appearance, is a benefit of MSP when rendered by medical practitioners and only for those patients with documented endocrine abnormality, drug-induced hirsutism or from hair-bearing facial graft.
- MSP authorization is required.

b. **Other Anatomical Areas**

- Not a benefit of MSP

**D. 9. 2. 7. Redundant Skin**

- a. Excision of redundant skin for elimination of wrinkles, etc. is not a benefit of MSP.
- b. Blepharoplasty is not a benefit of MSP unless there is documented evidence of medical necessity such as a visual field defect caused by the redundant eyelid skin and which meets the BCMA/MSD guidelines for significant defect.
- c. MSP authorization is required.

**D. 9. 3. Sub-Surface Pathology**

**D. 9. 3. 1. Congenital deformities**

**a. Face or neck**

Repair is a benefit of MSP except for:

- surgery to revise or remove features which are familial in nature;
- surgery to correct ear abnormalities in patients who are sixteen years of age or over.
- MSP authorization is required, other than recognized craniofacial disorders and cleft lip.

**b. Other Anatomical Areas**

- Normally not a benefit of MSP if surgery is for alteration of appearance only.

**D. 9. 3. 2 Post-Traumatic Deformities**

- Reconstructive procedures are a benefit at the acute stage; within a reasonable period of convalescence; or if part of a pre-planned staged process of repair.
- Repair procedures may include bone revision, tissue shifts and grafts, prosthesis implantation, etc.
- MSP authorization is required for repairs beyond the acute stage.

**D. 9. 3. 3. Deformities resulting from local disease** (such as loss or distortion of bone, muscle, connective tissue, adipose tissue, etc.).

**a. Head or Neck**

- Reconstructive procedures for significant abnormalities are a benefit at the acute stage; during a chronic disease process; within a reasonable period of convalescence, or if part of a planned staged process of repair initiated during one of these periods.
- Repair procedures normally could include tissue grafts, flaps, shifts or cell-assisted lipotransfer, bone revision, prosthesis insertion, etc.
- Face lifts, modified face lifts, brow lifts, etc. are not a benefit of MSP if skin, only, is involved in the procedure. However, a repair such as ptosis repair or face lift with underlying slings is a benefit of MSP if the procedure is to correct significant deformity following stroke, cancer, VIIth nerve palsy, etc.
- MSP authorization is required for repair of deformities resulting from local disease.

**b. Other Anatomical Areas**

- Not a benefit of MSP if the correction is for appearance, only.

#### **D. 9. 3. 4. Breast Surgery**

##### **a. Augmentation Mammoplasty**

- This procedure is a benefit of MSP unilaterally or bilaterally for a female patient with breast aplasia.
- It is a MSP benefit unilaterally for a female patient with a severely hypoplastic breast when the other breast is not also hypoplastic.
- A "balancing" augmentation mammoplasty may be allowed on an independent consideration basis for correction of unilateral hypoplasia when performed in association with approved contralateral reduction mammoplasty.
- MSP authorization is required.

##### **b. Post-Mastectomy Reconstruction**

- Unilateral or bilateral breast reconstruction, including cell-assisted Lipotransfer, is a benefit of MSP when the procedure is subsequent to total or partial mastectomy or prophylactic mastectomy.
- Authorization is not required but the reason for the reconstruction must accompany the claim.

##### **c. Reduction Mammoplasty**

- Reduction Mammoplasty is a benefit for female patients only, where there is significant associated symptomatology such as intertrigo, neck or back pain or shoulder grooving. Ptosis and/or size are not sufficient grounds for MSP coverage of reduction mammoplasty. Mastopexy is not normally covered by MSP.
- Unilateral reduction mammoplasty may be a benefit of MSP if there is gross disproportion present, or in association with approved unilateral augmentation mammoplasty or post mastectomy reconstruction of the contralateral breast.
- MSP authorization is required.

##### **d. Male Mastectomy**

- This procedure is a benefit of MSP for gynecomastia.
- MSP authorization is not required.

##### **e. Accessory breasts or accessory nipples**

- Excision of such accessory tissue is a benefit of MSP.
- The appropriate fee item normally would be from the skin tumour excision listings.
- Authorization is not required.

#### **D. 9. 3. 5. Excision of excess fatty tissue**

- This is a benefit of MSP only if there is significant associated symptomatology such as intertrigo, pain or excoriations.
- When performed for alteration of appearance, the removal of redundant skin and fat from the abdomen, extremities, etc. is not a benefit of MSP.
- There must be clinical evidence of substantial hyperplasia of adenomatous breast tissue.
- MSP authorization is required.

#### **D. 9. 4. Gender Reassignment Surgery**

Prior approval is required for gender reassignment surgery before the surgery is considered to be a MSP benefit. Approval for surgery requires a medical assessment by qualified medical assessors who have recognized and demonstrable expertise in the treatment of gender dysphoria.

Treatment for gender dysphoria refers to the guidelines provided by the World Professional Association for Transgender Health, Standards of Care.

If MSP has not approved funding for the gender-reassignment surgery, any medical consultation(s), anesthesiology and surgical assistance services related to the surgery, will not be eligible for MSP funding.

**D. 9. 5.        Complications and Revisions**

- a. The treatment of acute medical or surgical complications resulting from surgery for alteration of appearance and/or function is a benefit of MSP whether or not the original surgery was covered by MSP. This includes complications resulting from trans-sexual surgery (such as breakdown of the artificial vaginal wall). No authorization is required.
- b. Revision of surgery for alteration of appearance, because of undesirable results, is a benefit of MSP only if the original surgery was a benefit and if the revision either is part of a pre-planned staged process or occurs within a reasonable period of convalescence. Correction of the effects on appearance which are due to complications is a benefit of MSP if it is carried out within a reasonable period of convalescence. MSP authorization is required.

**D. 10.        Out-of-Office Premiums**

The out-of-office premium is an additional fee that may be billed for services initiated and rendered within designated time limits. These premiums are applicable to eligible insured medical services provided to MSP beneficiaries and can be billed by both General Practitioners and Specialists.

For complete details, please refer to the Out-of-Office Hours Premiums section of the MSC Payment Schedule.