

Tuberculosis Related Services - Charging

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Functional Sub group Corporate Administration - Fees
Clinical/ Patient Services - Infectious diseases
Population Health - Communicable Diseases

Summary To minimise the potential barriers for persons with Tuberculosis (TB) presenting and/or continuing in care TB investigations, care and treatment services are provided free of charge to persons residing in NSW regardless of Medicare eligibility or residency status. This Policy Directive has been revised to clarify issues around medication required for ensuring that TB medications can be tolerated and/or completed without side effects.

Replaces Doc. No. Tuberculosis Related Services - Charging for [PD2005_579]

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Applies to Area Health Services/Chief Executive Governed Statutory Health Corporation, Board Governed Statutory Health Corporations, Affiliated Health Organisations - Non Declared, Affiliated Health Organisations - Declared, Public Health System Support Division, Community Health Centres, Divisions of General Practice, Public Hospitals

Audience Administration, clerical, allied health, nursing, emergency departments

Distributed to Public Health System, Community Health Centres, Divisions of General Practice, Government Medical Officers, NSW Ambulance Service, NSW Department of Health, Public Health Units, Public Hospitals, Private Hospitals and Day Procedure Centres

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Status Active

Director-General

This Policy Directive may be varied, withdrawn or replaced at any time. Compliance with this directive is **mandatory** for NSW Health and is a condition of subsidy for public health organisations.

TUBERCULOSIS RELATED SERVICES – CHARGING

This Policy Directive supersedes Policy Directive PD2005_579 *TB Related Services - Charging for*

This Policy Directive is to be read in conjunction with the following Policy Directives:

PD2005_411 *Commonwealth Detention Centres use of NSW Health Services*
PD2007_006 *Occupational assessment, screening and vaccination against specified infectious diseases*

PD2005_208 *Bacille Calmette Guerin Vaccination*

NSW Health policy is that:

1. Investigations

All investigations for cases, or suspected cases of tuberculosis (TB) including chest x ray following identification of a positive tuberculin skin test and/or TB related health assessments, carried out through admitted patient and non admitted patient services (including ambulatory care services) in NSW public hospitals and health facilities must be provided *free of charge* to the patient.

2. Treatment and medication

All medications related to the treatment of TB provided through admitted patient and non admitted patient services (including ambulatory care) in NSW public hospitals and health facilities must be provided *free of charge* to the patient. This includes medication required for ensuring that TB medications can be tolerated and/or completed without side effects.

3. TB Prevention

The provision of TB prevention services through admitted patient and non admitted patient services (including ambulatory care) in NSW public hospitals and health facilities must be provided *free of charge* to the community and patients. These services include: contact tracing assessments, professional and community education.

Vaccination with Bacille Calmette Guerin (BCG) is to be provided free of charge if administered in accordance with NSW Health recommendations as outlined in the Policy Directive PD2005_208 *BCG Vaccination*. Where vaccination with BCG occurs outside of the specified recommendations a fee for the vaccination can be applied.

This policy applies to the following:

- all residents of NSW, including prison inmates and persons in juvenile detention centres
- migrants and refugees referred by the Commonwealth and/or State Health Departments
- persons who are ineligible for Medicare benefits
- temporary residents or visitors suspected to have active tuberculosis, and

- TB referrals from other chest clinics in Australia for persons residing in NSW.

4. The policy does not apply to:

People on **an employer sponsored** Long Term Business Entry Visa, subclass 457. People on this type of visa are sponsored by the companies employing them in Australia as per the Commonwealth Department of Immigration and Citizenship (DIAC) Regulations which states that “the sponsor undertakes to accept financial responsibility directly or through acceptable medical insurance arrangements, for medical and hospital costs incurred in Australia by sponsored persons and their dependents”.

5. Onshore Immigration Applicants

Each year a number of temporary residents apply to DIAC to extend or amend their visa classification while in Australia. DIAC requires that these persons undertake health screening as part of their application. TB screening is one component of this screening process. The applicant must meet the cost of this screening, however, should TB infection or disease be identified subsequent management, care and/or treatment is to be provided free of charge.

6. Occupational Screening for Health Care Workers

NSW Health is committed to ensuring the health and safety of all patients in health care settings and providing a safe and healthy working environment for all employees. This commitment includes adopting an occupational screening policy for TB that minimises the risk of transmission of TB to health care consumers and providers within Health Services.

Employers (in both the public and private sectors) of health care workers are responsible for meeting the cost of occupational screening and vaccination programs related to TB including; tuberculin skin testing (TST), BCG vaccination (as per NSW Health recommendations) and related service delivery. The principle for charging employers for occupational screening is one of cost recovery.

The cost of TB screening for “other clinical personnel” as defined in the NSW Health Policy Directive PD2007_006 *Occupational assessment, screening and vaccination against specified infectious diseases* is to be met by the individual. “Other clinical personnel” must cooperate with occupational TB screening programs and undertake TB screening consistent with the provisions of PD2007_006 *Occupational assessment, screening and vaccination against specified infectious diseases* policy.

TB Screening for “other clinical personnel” is to be undertaken by NSW TB Prevention and Control Services/Chest Clinics. The exception is where the TB Prevention and Control Service/Chest Clinic determines that another service or organisation is more appropriate to undertake occupational screening. In this scenario, occupational screening must then be undertaken in collaboration with,

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and under the coordination of, the Area Health Service TB Prevention and Control Services/ Chest Clinic Service.

7. Occupational Screening for other workers

Where screening is required for employees (other than health care workers) a fee for screening and related services can be applied by the Area Health Service. The principle for charging employers for occupational screening is one of cost recovery.

8. Referral to private providers

Where a public health organisation initiates investigations (on behalf of a patient) with a private practitioner or service, the public health organisation is responsible for meeting the cost of the service or investigations.

9. Medicare benefits

Medicare benefits cannot be paid for professional services related to the care and treatment of tuberculosis provided for public patients in public health facilities funded by either the State or Commonwealth Health Department unless the Commonwealth Minister for Health and Ageing has directed that Medicare benefits are to be paid. Currently, there are no Ministerial directions in place permitting Medicare benefits to be paid for tuberculosis related professional services for public patients within the public health system in NSW. Therefore, there are no tuberculosis related investigations, treatment or vaccination services provided by NSW Chest Clinics that can be billed to Medicare.

Medicare benefits are payable for patients who elect to be chargeable when admitted to a public hospital. This arrangement applies to chargeable patients admitted for investigation and care of TB.

10. Immigration Detention Centres

Where TB Services are provided to a person held in a Commonwealth Immigration Detention Centre, the Area Health Service is to charge the Commonwealth Department of Immigration through its contractor at the appropriate 'Ineligible Patient' rate as per PD2005_411.

11. Delays in the provision of care

Issues surrounding financial remuneration should not delay investigations care or treatment for persons with tuberculosis.

Professor Debora Picone AM
Director-General