Hamilton Medical Centre

Billing, Fees, Patient Payments and Outstanding Accounts (Debtors) Policy and Procedures

Hamilton Medical Centre – Billings, Fees, Patient Payments, and Outstanding Accounts (Debtors) Policy and Procedures

This policy provides guidance to staff and patients about the Practice billing categories and types, fees, how patients can pay and what happens when patients fail to pay, following a consultation.

Billing and Fees

Policy

The Practice will always provide patients and stakeholders with sufficient information about the billing, fees, and the associated policy, to enable patients to give full financial consent for any consultations or treatments provided.

There are several ways that the Practice communicates with patients to advise of changes, updates and amendments to the billing policy and subsequent fee levels. These are;

- Face to face, either with clinical or non-clinical staff
- Notices in the waiting room, or other spaces, as appropriate
- Via the TV screens in the waiting room
- On the Practice website
- Posts on the Practice Facebook page.

The Practice operates a private billing fee structure. There are exceptions to this, where the practice will discount bill or bulk bill patients for certain services, or groups of people depending on predefined criteria.

Bulk Billing

Patients in the following groups will be bulk billed:

- Children - 12 years of age and under.

Patients accessing the following services will be bulk billed:

- Services that form part of a GP Management Plan (referred to as a GPMP or Care Plan)
- Health assessments
- Childhood immunisations.

The patient must be able to produce a current, valid Medicare card at the time of consultation, if required.

Discount Billing

Patients who hold the following (except for Compounding Chemist products, discussions, and appointments):

- Healthcare Concession cards (HCC)
- Pensioners Concession Cards (PCC)
- DVA Gold Card
- DVA White - for consultations that solely relate to their accepted and approved conditions.

The patient must be able to produce a current, valid HCC, PCC or DVA card at the time of consultation, if required.

Everyone else will be privately billed. Details of the item numbers, practice fees, rebates and out of pocket expenses, can be found on the Hamilton Medical Centre website, under fees.

Procedure

The Practice will review the categories, groups and services covered under the policy:

- Annually, or
- as and when there are changes to Medicare rules, item numbers and benefits, or
- there is a business requirement or need to do so.

Patient Payments and Outstanding Accounts (Debtors)

Policy

Patients who are privately or discount billed are expected to pay (as deemed in the Billing and Fees policy), at the time of their appointment. For the avoidance of doubt, anyone who does not pay at the time of their appointment or at the latest by the close of business on the day of the appointment, will be considered to have an outstanding account, and be categorised in the Practice Management Software as a debtor and fall under the remit of the policy.

Procedure – Patient Payments (Private and Discounted Billing)

Patients can pay for their appointments in a number of ways:

- For face-to-face appointments payment can be made using a debit, credit or eftpos card (via a Tyro machine) or cash
- For phone or telehealth appointments, the doctor will pass patients through to reception at the end of the consultation, to pay immediately with either a debit, credit or eftpos card
- If appointments have been booked online, we may process the payment using the stored card details
- Medicare rebates will be processed as part of this transaction
- Patients will be asked if they would like a receipt, if so, then a receipt will be provided.

Procedure – Patient Payments (Bulk Billing)

For bulk billed transactions, the patient will be asked to:

- Assign their benefits as full and final payment for the services provided by the doctor
    - This can be via either an electronic confirmation using the Medicare EasyClaim system, or by completion of a DB4 benefits form. Completed either by the patient or on behalf of the patient by an appropriate parent or guardian.

Procedure – Outstanding Accounts (Debtors)

Patients will be given;

- Three opportunities to pay
- The process will last a maximum of one month from the date of the appointment with the outstanding debt, before they are made inactive.

If a patient does not pay for their appointment either prior to, immediately after or by the end of the day of their appointment, the following process will apply:

- A text message will be sent to the patient before the close of business, at the latest, advising them that they have not paid and will need to call and pay the outstanding amount.
  - A record of the text being sent including the date and the time, will be placed on the patient's file.
- If no payment is received on the day, a call will be made to the patient's phone number, the following morning. If there is no answer a message will be left, advising them of the unpaid account, the date and time of the unpaid appointment and the phone number to call back on to make payment.
  - A record of the phone call being made including the date and the time, will be placed on the patient's file.
  - A note will be placed on the patients file under Appointment Notes, saying:
    - ***No further appointments to be made. Outstanding Account xx/xx/xx ***
- If there is no response from the message, an email will be sent to the patient up to 7 days later, from the Practice Manager, advising them that attempts have been made to contact them and to facilitate pay.
  - A record of the email being sent including the date and the time, will be placed on the patient's file.
- If no response is received or payment made, the patient will be made inactivate up to 7 days from the date of the email.
  - A record of the patient being made inactive including the date and the time, will be placed on the patient's file.
- If no payment is received following the SMS, phone call and email, then the debt could be passed to a debt collection agency.
  - A record of the patient being sent to debt collection including the date and the time, will be placed on the patients file, with the note below under Appointment Notes:
    - ***Not to be readmitted as a patient. Outstanding Account xx/xx/xx – debt collection***
  - If the debit is unrecoverable, a note will be placed in the patients notes under Appointment Notes, saying:
    - ***Not to be readmitted as a patient. Outstanding Account xx/xx/xx – debt written off***