

REIMBURSEMENT OF BREAST CANCER TREATMENT USING STRONTIUM ⁸⁹

Australia's supply of Samarium ¹⁵³ (Quadramet) has been interrupted and is currently unavailable due to production problems. It is anticipated that production of this isotope will resume again towards the end of October 2007. Quadramet is funded under Medicare item 16018 to provide pain relief from bone metastases in certain circumstances.

During this period of unavailability, the Department of Health and Ageing has been advised that some medical practitioners in Australia are substituting Samarium with another drug, Strontium ⁸⁹ (Metastron). Metastron can be made available in these circumstances through the Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) Special Access Scheme.

However, Metastron is not covered by an MBS item when accessed in this way and so there may be a high out-of-pocket cost for patients. In response to this, the Department has negotiated an in-principle agreement with the Department of Finance and Administration to assist affected patients with their expenses. Under the Act of Grace program, administered through the Department of Finance and Administration, approved patients will be reimbursed for costs equivalent to that normally paid under Medicare for similar treatment. It should be noted that support for an Act of Grace payment will only be provided for treatment with Metastron while the supply of Quadramet is unavailable.

Patients are advised to forward their accounts or unpaid invoices together with their contact details and details of the treating practitioner to the Department of Health and Ageing. The attached document can be used as a guide when applying. The information should be sent to:

The Director
Schedule Production and Review Section
MBS Policy Implementation Branch
Department of Health and Ageing
MDP 106
GPO Box 9848
CANBERRA ACT 2601

Officers in the Department of Health and Ageing will then facilitate the submission of applications to the Department of Finance and Administration, and will continue to liaise with officers in that Department to ensure that these submissions are considered as a matter of urgency.

To ensure patients are aware of this process the Department has written to the Australian and New Zealand Association of Physicians in Nuclear Medicine to inform their members of these arrangements and ask them to advise affected patients to forward claims for payment or reimbursement to the Department as soon as possible

Approval of an Act of Grace payment made under Section 33 of the *Financial Management and Accountability Act 1977* is at the discretion of the Minister for Finance or his delegate. In the case of Metastron, submissions will be considered by a delegate of the Minister and following approval, payment will be provided to claimants at the earliest opportunity.

Further Information

If further information or assistance is required please contact the Schedule Production and Review Section via the MBS Online freecall number - 1800 020 103.

Queries about the progress of applications should also be referred to this number.

The following can be used as a guide to seek reimbursement:

**REQUEST FOR ACT OF GRACE PAYMENT(S)
FOR BREAST CANCER TREATMENTS USING STRONTIUM 89**

I hereby request an Act of Grace payment for my breast cancer treatment using Strontium 89.

My details are as follows:

First name(s): _____

Last name: _____

Postal Address

Street No: _____

Street Name & Type: _____

Town / Suburb: _____

State: _____

Postcode: _____

Telephone: _____

Date of Birth: _____

Medicare Card Number: _____

The details of my treatment are as follows:

Date of Service(s): _____

Service Provider: _____

Postal Address

Street No: _____

Street Name & Type: _____

Town / Suburb: _____

State: _____

Postcode: _____

Telephone: _____

I have attached copy of account/invoice for this service.

Signed: _____

Date: _____