Isolated Patients Travel & Accommodation Assistance Scheme (IPTAAS) Changes

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                      Clinical/ Patient Services - Transport
Summary  The Information Bulletin outlines the changes to the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme effective 1 January 2012. Information in this Bulletin updates certain information contained in Policy Directive PD2009_042 Transport for Health - Isolated Patients Travel & Accommodation Assistance Scheme Administration Manual and the Policy Directive will be revised in early 2012.
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Applies to  Local Health Districts, Speciality Network Governed Statutory Health Corporations, Community Health Centres, Dental Schools and Clinics, Public Hospitals
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ISOLATED PATIENTS TRAVEL AND ACCOMMODATION ASSISTANCE SCHEME CHANGES

PURPOSE

To provide information on changes to the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme.

This information is to be read in conjunction with PD2009_042 Transport for Health – Isolated Patients Travel & Accommodation Assistance Scheme Administration Manual (July 2009). Where information differs, the information in this bulletin applies. The following changes will be reflected in a new policy to replace PD2009_042 early 2012.

KEY INFORMATION

The Minister for Health recently announced additional funding for the Isolated Patients Travel and Accommodation Assistance Scheme (IPTAAS). The changes, effective from 1st January 2012, will mean an increase in financial assistance available to patients who need to travel long distances to access specialist medical treatment, and increase the number of people who will benefit from the scheme.

IPTAAS is a subsidy program, which provides financial assistance to help with travel and accommodation costs for patients (and eligible escorts) who need to travel long distances to access specialist treatment not available locally. Currently, patients travelling a distance of at least 100km each way are eligible for the scheme. The changes announced by the Minister for Health recently mean that from 1st January 2012 any patient travelling a cumulative distance of at least 200km per week to access their nearest treating specialist will also be eligible. This will significantly increase the number of people who can benefit from the scheme, particularly those requiring specialist treatment for a chronic disease.

From 1st January 2012, any patient who resides in New South Wales and is eligible for Medicare is eligible to apply to IPTAAS.

The Minister for Health has also determined that claims are to be processed within 30 days of their receipt. Currently, the time limit for processing claims is 45 days.

New Rates- Effective from 1st January 2012

- Increase in fuel subsidy from 15 to 19 cents/km
- Private accommodation subsidy increase from $30 per week to $140 per week, and the current one-week exclusion period discontinued
- Increase in commercial accommodation subsidy from $33 per night single room, $46 per night double room to $43 and $60 per night respectively
- The $40 co-contribution levied on each claim made by non-pensioners/non-health care card holders will be capped once a patient’s IPTAAS subsidies reach $1,000 within a one year period. The one year period should be calculated from the date of the first specialist appointment. This will benefit those travelling regularly, such as patients requiring specialist treatment for a chronic disease. The calculation of subsidies in relation to the co-
contribution cap should commence on 1st January 2012 and is not be applied retrospectively.

- The $40 co-contribution is to be levied on the total weekly IPTAAS subsidy payable to patients who are non-pensioners/health care card holders and are claiming under the 200km per week cumulative distance criterion.

- For some people, the subsidy entitlement for each individual journey may be $40 or less. However, the small number of people this applies to should continue to submit IPTAAS Application Forms or Travel Diaries to enable the contribution cap to be applied.

**For example:** a non-pensioner health care card holder travels 210km per week by motor vehicle:

The weekly IPTAAS fuel subsidy is $40

After deducting the $40 co-contribution, the patient does not receive a reimbursement

However, after 25 weeks the total IPTAAS subsidy before deduction of the co-contribution = $1,000

From week 26 until the one-year period ends, the patient will receive a weekly reimbursement of $40.

To apply for financial assistance, eligible patients must complete an application form, which should also be signed by the referring practitioner and treating specialist.

**Travel Diary**
To reduce the number of times that patients have to complete an application form, increased use should be made of the travel diary.

This means that when a patient is referred to a specialist and has to make multiple visits to that specialist:

- An IPTAAS Application Form is submitted for the first visit

- For subsequent visits to **the same specialist** within a year of referral, the patient is only required to submit a travel diary signed by the specialist (or authorised representative), together with receipts for travel by public transport and/or accommodation. No further application forms need to be submitted during that period unless circumstances (such as place of residence or location of appointment) change.

- Claims may be submitted monthly but must be lodged within six months of each return journey.

- As currently applies, referrals from local medical practitioners to specialists must be provided on a 12 monthly basis. Each time the referral is renewed, a new IPTAAS Application Form will need to be submitted.

- When supplying the Travel Diary to eligible patients, IPTAAS Offices will ensure that information specifying where patients should submit the Travel Diary supplement is attached or incorporated in the Travel Diaries, for example:
  - Attach a copy of list of IPTAAS Offices to the diary
  - Staple a card with details of the IPTAAS Office address to the diary
  - Attach a sticker detailing IPTAAS Office address to the diary
Exceptions for use of Travel Diary
- Patients requiring air travel are not able to claim using the Travel Diary and should submit an application form on each occasion.
- When a patient attends a subsequent appointment with a different treating specialist they must complete and submit a separate application form for each specialist.
- If circumstances change, (e.g. change of place of residence, bank details appointment location, requirement for escort etc.) then a new application form will need to be submitted.

Claiming the subsidy after travel
- Claims made by patients travelling a cumulative distance of at least 200km per week are to be paid on a monthly basis.
- These patients should submit their monthly claims using the single page travel diary, available from their local IPTAAS office.
- In circumstances where the requirement to claim on a monthly basis causes financial hardship for the patient, payments may be made on a weekly basis.
- Claims using the Travel Diary must be submitted in the referral timeframe on their claim form.
- If a patient is making monthly claims, they will be able to make twelve of these within the one year validity period of their claim form. The final trip on the last monthly claim for that year must fall within the timeframe for validity of the specialist referral on the claim form.
- Claims for use of private transport made using the travel diary will only be valid with signature and name of the treating specialist or his/her representative to confirm that the patient used private transport to access their care.

Implementation
These changes come into effect on 1st January 2012

Claims Process Streamlining
The Ministry of Health is currently streamlining the claims process to make it easier for patients. Further consultations with stakeholders will take place in 2012 to inform changes to the claims process including improving the application form.

The initial steps to make the process easier might include:
- The option to download an application form from the IPTAAS internet page which can be saved to a personal computer, filled in electronically, then printed out
- Extended use of travel diary, in certain circumstances
- Improved communication with patients including improved website and patient information leaflet.
- Updated Policy Directive

More information about the Scheme can be found by visiting NSW Health website at: www.health.nsw.gov.au/living/transport/iptaas.html or by contacting the relevant telephone number below.
### Local Health District (LHD)

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<tr>
<th>LHD</th>
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<tr>
<td>Southern NSW LHD</td>
<td>Tel: 1800 800 511</td>
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<td>Murrumbidgee LHD</td>
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<td>Far West LHD</td>
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<td>Hunter New England LHD</td>
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<td>Western Sydney LHD</td>
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<td>Nepean Blue Mountains LHD</td>
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