

CIVIL SERVICE BUREAU CIRCULAR NO. 6/2009
Arrangements for
Reimbursement / Direct Payment of Medical Expenses

To: Directors of Bureau c.c. Commissioner, Independent
Permanent Secretaries Commission Against Corruption
Heads of Department Judiciary Administrator
Secretary, Public Service
Commission

(Note: Distribution of this circular is Scale A. It should be read by all officers.
A Chinese version is attached.)

Purpose

This circular sets out the arrangements for reimbursement of medical expenses incurred by eligible persons defined in paragraph 3 below for treatment in Hospital Authority (HA) hospitals / clinics.

2. CSB Circular No. 7/2006, CSB Circular Memorandum No. 5/2007 and Secretary for the Civil Service's (SCS') memoranda referenced (55) and (55) in PC/700/000/1 Pt. 17 dated 17 May 2007 and 23 July 2007 respectively are hereby cancelled.

Existing Policy on Reimbursement of Medical Expenses

3. CSR 900¹ provides that medical advice and treatment, X-ray examinations and medicines are available free of charge to an eligible person and his family only when these benefits are provided by the Government or HA medical services. CSR 902 further provides that the treatment provided will be dictated by the medical

¹ Under CSR 900(3), the following persons are eligible for civil service medical benefits -

- (a) monthly paid officers and their families;
- (b) daily rated staff who are injured in the course of their duty;
- (c) retired Government officers living in Hong Kong and in receipt of a pension or an annual allowance and their families living in Hong Kong;
- (d) families of officers killed on duty and living in Hong Kong; and
- (e) families living in Hong Kong and in receipt of a pension under the 'Widows' and Orphans Pension Scheme or the Surviving Spouses' and Children's Pensions Scheme following the death of officers while in service or after retirement.

necessity of the case. Every endeavour will be made to give officers and their families the best available medical attendance and treatment, but the medical officer in charge of the case has the sole discretion as to the amount and the nature of treatment provided.

4. Notwithstanding the comprehensive scope of services provided by HA, there may be occasions where the required drugs / equipment / services which form an essential part of the medical treatment as prescribed by the attending HA doctors on medical grounds are either not available in HA or are chargeable by HA. Under such circumstances, eligible persons may apply to Director of Health (DH) for payment of such items.

5. For the purpose of reimbursement of medical expenses incurred by eligible persons, the attending HA doctors may provide the required certification if the drugs / equipment / services are:-

- (a) prescribed on medical grounds (excluding lifestyle items that are not required out of the medical necessity of the patient but as a matter of personal convenience or preference, or items not related to treatment of ailment); and
- (b) without alternative treatment of equivalent efficacy available in HA free of charge; or if such is available, patients do not respond well clinically to the alternative treatment.

Application Form for Reimbursement / Direct Payment of Medical Expenses

6. In connection with the extension of the direct payment arrangement to cover cancer drugs provided by HA with effect from 27 April 2009 (as detailed in paragraphs 14 - 16 below), the existing application form for reimbursement / direct payment of medical expenses has been suitably revised. The revised application form enclosed at Annex A should be used with effect from 27 April 2009. The form may be downloaded from the website of Civil Service Bureau at www.csb.gov.hk. Eligible persons are advised to bring along the reimbursement application form when they attend medical consultation at HA facilities. A limited quantity of the application forms is placed at major HA hospitals for use by eligible persons who may not have brought along a form for medical certification. A list of the hospitals that keep a limited quantity of the application forms is at Annex B.

7. On reimbursement of expenses on medical equipment, our policy is that unless the attending HA doctor has certified that a specific or a more sophisticated model of the equipment is required, only the costs of the basic model will be reimbursable. Specifically, for Continuous Positive Airway Pressure machines, a detailed note setting out the reimbursement arrangements, including the maximum rate for a basic model, is at Annex C.

8. In respect of the arrangement for direct payment of medical expenses between the Government and HA, at present such arrangement has been put in place for percutaneous transluminal coronary angioplasty (PTCA) cases, intraocular lens procedures, non-PTCA consumables for interventional cardiology and positron emission tomography (PET) service provided by HA. Under this arrangement, HA purchases the required items on behalf of the patients. Eligible persons may complete the application form at Annex A for DH to settle the payment with HA direct. In such cases, the eligible persons concerned are not required to make any advance payment to HA and completion of Part D of the application form by the applicants' (who are serving officers) bureaux / departments is not required.

9. Instead of seeking reimbursement, eligible persons may also apply to DH for the direct settlement of expenses with outside suppliers, provided that the requisite medical certification from the attending HA doctor has been obtained. In such cases, the eligible person should secure the acceptance of such direct payment arrangement from the suppliers concerned before submitting the applications to DH. If an application is rejected by DH or the amount approved is less than the actual amount incurred, the eligible person concerned should settle the outstanding sum with the outside supplier direct.

10. Application for reimbursement / direct payment of medical expenses should be made by the civil servant / pensioner. Applicants should read carefully the "Notes for Applicants" in the application form when completing the form. Applicants are advised to submit their applications within three months of the purchase of the medical items as far as practicable to facilitate timely processing by DH.

Items that are not reimbursable

11. Eligible persons should note in particular that the reimbursement / direct payment arrangement does NOT apply to the following situations -

- (a) the purchase of drugs / equipment / services from outside if the items are available in HA (whether chargeable or not);
- (b) the eligible persons seek medical treatment from private facilities or procure medicines from private dispensaries on their own accord, even in cases of emergency; or
- (c) the eligible persons consult an individual HA doctor or a member of the teaching staff of a university, and obtain drugs / equipment / services as his / her private patients.

12. In respect of paragraph 11(a) above, the purchase of drugs not covered by HA's standard fees and charges is reimbursable so long as they are prescribed according to the criteria set out in paragraph 5 above.

13. In respect of paragraph 11(c), the private service described above falls outside the scope of civil service medical benefits. Accordingly, the medical expenses arising from the patronage of private service are not reimbursable.

Application Form for Direct Payment Arrangement for Cancer Drugs Provided by HA

14. With effect from 27 April 2009, subject to the rules set out in this circular, eligible persons may apply for direct payment of medical expenses for cancer drugs provided by HA, using the application form at Annex D. Eligible persons are not required to pay for such items. DH will settle the payment for cancer drugs with HA direct. The application form may be downloaded from the website of Civil Service Bureau at www.csb.gov.hk or obtained from the staff of HA hospitals / clinics with oncology drug dispensing service and offices specified at Annex B.

15. Applications for direct payment of cancer drugs provided by HA pharmacies should be made by the civil servant or pensioner under normal circumstances. Applicants should read carefully the "Notes for Applicants" in the application form when completing the form. Eligible persons who are hospitalised are only required to submit an application for direct payment of cancer drugs once within the same episode of hospitalisation in the same hospital. For eligible persons using outpatient services and eligible persons who are discharged from hospitals, a fresh application should be submitted each time when cancer drug(s) is / are prescribed. The duly completed form together with the invoice should be submitted to the staff of HA hospitals / clinics concerned. Upon checking the eligibility, the staff will issue a receipt to the eligible person who should present the receipt to the ward / pharmacy for obtaining the prescribed cancer drugs.

16. The above direct payment arrangement does not apply to cancer drugs purchased from non-HA pharmacies. For such cases, the application form at Annex A should be used instead.

Pensioners

17. To tie in with the full roll-out of the Medical and Dental Benefits Eligibility Checking System (ECS) on 30 June 2008, eligible pensioners covered by the ECS applying for reimbursement of medical expenses are no longer required to attach a Try. 447 to the reimbursement application form. For those pensioners not covered by the ECS², they should attach a valid Try. 447 (revised 2008) to the reimbursement application form. Irrespective of whether a pensioner is covered by the ECS or not, if a retired officer whose pension or annual allowance has been suspended under the pensions legislation, he / she and his / her dependants are not eligible for civil service medical benefits and the relevant medical expenses will not be reimbursable.

² This refers to pensioners without Hong Kong Identity cards.

Drugs Provided at DH's Families Clinics

18. Eligible persons are entitled to free services and drugs provided at DH's families clinics as staff benefits. Under the existing arrangement, the attending doctors of families clinics would prescribe drugs available in DH's dispensaries to eligible persons having regard to their medical condition. DH regularly reviews the list of drugs provided at its dispensaries to cater for changing service needs. In case the attending doctor of families clinics prescribes drugs which form an essential part of the medical treatment to the patient on medical grounds but such drugs are not available in DH's dispensaries, the civil servant or pensioner concerned may apply to DH for reimbursement of medical expenses incurred on the drugs. The application form at Annex A is applicable for this purpose.

Timely Updating of Personal Particulars

19. Confirmation of eligibility for civil service medical and dental benefits is an essential prerequisite for reimbursement / direct payment of medical expenses. We would like to remind officers that it is their responsibility to report promptly to departmental management the personal particulars of themselves and their eligible dependants on first appointment and upon changes in such particulars as and when they arise, in order that departmental management can arrange timely updating of the personal particulars in the departmental records and / or Treasury's Central Payroll Related Database (or electronic template). In particular, officers are reminded to update information on full-time education or vocational training of their dependent children at the age of 19 or 20 as the ECS will automatically exclude all dependent children once they reached the age of 19. If officers fail to report changes in personal particulars, thus resulting in the provision of civil service medical benefits (including reimbursement / direct payment of medical expenses) to ineligible persons, the officer concerned will be held liable for payment of unpaid charges and recovery of over-paid benefits. Disciplinary action and / or legal proceedings may also be commenced.


Re-circulation

20. Departmental management should re-circulate this circular on a six-monthly basis.

Enquiries

21. Enquiries concerning this circular should be addressed to Departmental Secretaries who, if in doubt, may contact Chief Executive Officer (Conditions of Service) (2810 3083), Senior Executive Officer (Conditions of Service)1 (2810 3082) or Executive Officer (Conditions of Service)1 (2810 3079) of this Bureau. For enquiries concerning processing of applications and related payment and accounting arrangements, please contact the Finance Division of the Department of Health (2961 8612, 2961 8445 or 2961 8656).

22. For pensioners, they may contact the Pensioner Services Unit of this Bureau (2810 3850) or the Pensions Enquiry Office of the Treasury (2829 5113 or 2829 5114).


(Raymond NG)
for Secretary for the Civil Service