

GUIDELINES FOR PAYMENTS TO GPs PARTICIPATING IN ENHANCED DIVISIONAL QUALITY USE OF MEDICINES (EDQUM) PROGRAM ACTIVITIES

1. BACKGROUND

The letter of agreement (Attachment A) between each participating Division of General Practice and the Department of Health and Ageing states in part 2 that:

'Health expects that no payments will be made directly to GPs for participation in EDQUM activities.'

The EDQUM Program has been designed to encourage prescribing practices that improve standards of patient care through evidence based Quality Use of Medicines (QUM) initiatives. It is essential that EDQUM does not provide financial incentives to GPs that may lead to under-prescribing, or provide financial gain. The reference (in part 2 of the letter of agreement) is designed to meet this imperative.

Some Divisions have requested clarification about the particular reference in part 2 of the letter of agreement, given its broad nature, and have pointed out that there may be instances where it is appropriate for small payments to be made to GPs. It is acknowledged that a variety of approaches are used by Divisions to involve GPs in education activities. Some Divisions have also noted that they currently make payments to GPs for participation in some activities. In response to this request, the EDQUM Steering Group has developed guidelines to assist Divisions in interpreting this provision.

The guidelines are designed to:

- successfully withstand public and professional scrutiny now and over time;
- conform to professional standards of ethics;
- be flexible while still retaining boundaries;
- have scope to be refined over time as the program further develops; and
- encourage a sustainable approach to the program.

2. GUIDELINES FOR USE OF DIVISIONAL FUNDS (PILOT PHASE)

The pilot phase of EDQUM will involve participating Divisions undertaking a range of QUM activities, targeting one or more of antibiotics, peptic ulcer drugs or cardiovascular drugs. Divisions are funding these activities through a range of mechanisms such as using Outcomes Based Funding (in consultation with Department State Offices), utilising some or all of the 25% of flexible NPS capacity in current agreements should this be uncommitted, or using separate designated Divisional funds.

The types of activities that GPs may receive payments for include: attending educational sessions targeting the program's drug groups; providing expertise/input

to decision-making or program development activities (ie committee involvement); or for other administrative processes associated with EDQUM.

In order to provide guidance on how to consider payments (whether these are financial or material), the following guidelines are offered:

- (a) any approach to payments should be consistent with those applied to National Prescribing Service activities within the Division;
- (b) any payments for services should be appropriate and in proportion to the service or activity undertaken;
- (c) payments may be made where GPs are providing a service, such as conducting an educational seminar or providing data expertise;
- (d) the design and conduct of activities should not be influenced by any payments to GPs;
- (e) any payment should clearly not provide an incentive;
- (f) the amount of payment should not exceed the level that the GP might reasonably be expected to incur for themselves under similar circumstances;
- (g) if payments are made, they should not influence the GP in their prescribing or dispensing of pharmaceutical products;
- (h) any payments should at a maximum reimburse actual expenses incurred;
- (i) any approach to payments should be consistent with codes of conduct or policies developed within the particular Division of General Practice;
- (j) payments should be able to withstand public and professional scrutiny; and
- (k) any payment should be consistent with the Division's constitution.

3. GUIDELINES FOR USE OF SAVINGS RECEIVED (PRIMARY HEALTH CARE ACTIVITIES PHASE)

During the primary health care activities phase, savings may be identified for a participating Division that are a result of EDQUM activities. The Department is developing, in consultation with the EDQUM Steering Group, the methodology for providing this funding.

Should a Division receive funds (savings), these funds will be used to support primary health care activities at the Divisional level. The Division will need to put forward a proposal for primary health care activities on which any payments made to the Division will be spent. This will be agreed with the Department, in consultation with the EDQUM Steering Group. Payments to GPs involved in these primary health care activities shall be guided by the criteria set out in Part 2.