



Australian Government
Department of Health

Mr John Batten
President
Royal Australasian College of Surgeons
college.sec@surgeons.org

Dear Mr Batten

Upcoming changes to the Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) to exclude the claiming of items in association with the insertion of the AspireAssist weight loss system.

The department has been made aware of the possibility that practitioners may be claiming current MBS items in order to attract benefits for the insertion of the AspireAssist system – a device that claims to facilitate weight loss in obese patients.

The AspireAssist system is not listed on the prosthesis list and insertion of the device to facilitate weight loss in obese patients has not been considered by the Medical Services Advisory Committee (MSAC) in terms of its safety, clinical effectiveness and cost effectiveness. The MSAC is an independent expert committee that appraises new medical services proposed for public funding and provides advice to Government on whether a new medical service should be listed on the MBS. For more information please visit www.msac.gov.au.

Preliminary analysis indicates that items 30481, 30482 and 30483 may be used for the insertion of the AspireAssist system. I write to you to inform you that the insertion of the AspireAssist system falls outside the policy intent of these items, which were introduced for an entirely different patient population to those individuals who would be requiring a device to facilitate weight loss.

The department intends to restrict any relevant MBS items to prevent potential inappropriate claiming in association with the insertion of the AspireAssist system that lacks sufficient evidence of safety and clinical effectiveness. We will advise on how these restrictions will be implemented shortly.

Lastly, the department is aware of the emergence of new techniques used for the treatment of clinical obesity, additional to the AspireAssist system, such as endoscopic sleeve gastropasty and gastric balloon techniques. These procedures fall outside the scope of the current bariatric items listed on the MBS as they have not been assessed by the MSAC as being suitable for MBS funding and therefore benefits cannot be claimed for providing these services. Please visit the MSAC website for further information on how to submit an application for a service not currently listed on the MBS.

If you require further information please contact Mary Warner on (02) 6289 7315, or via email at mary.warner@health.gov.au.

I would be grateful if you could forward this information to your members.

Yours sincerely

A handwritten signature in black ink, consisting of several loops and a long horizontal stroke at the end.

Michael Ryan
A/g Assistant Secretary
MBS Policy and Specialist Services Branch

31 October 2017