



SMA SUPPORTS MOH'S MEDICAL FEE BENCHMARKS

On January 21, 2018, the Ministry of Health (MOH) announced the appointment of a Fee Benchmarks Advisory Committee to recommend industry benchmarks for medical procedures and services. This afternoon, MOH made a public announcement of the medical fee benchmarks which it had sought participation from the Singapore Medical Association (SMA) and also the Academy of Medicine, Singapore (AMS) and the College of Family Physicians Singapore (CFPS), through our representatives on the Fee Benchmarks Advisory Committee. The benchmark is also a recommendation from the Health Insurance Task Force (HITF).

SMA has been an advocate of transparency in fees and supports the introduction and objectives of the fee benchmarks which will facilitate patient empowerment and promote trust in the doctor-patient relationship. SMA was involved in the process of developing the fee benchmarks and is of the opinion that it was a fair process. The fee benchmarks will benefit doctors (who will now have a guide when they set their fees), patients and payers. The fee benchmarks are one of several ways that rising healthcare costs can be addressed. Other equally

important measures include looking at hospital facility charges, and redesigning insurance products.

The introduction of fee benchmarks will open the way to several changes in the future that will generate simplicity and thus help control healthcare costs. First, ill patients will no longer need to delay treatment as they await prior approval from insurance companies, in cases where doctors follow the benchmarks. Second, insurance companies will no longer need to have appointed insurance panels, thus saving the attendant administrative costs. Third, patients will have a wider choice of doctors, if they are allowed to consult any doctor who charges within the fee benchmarks.

SMA supports the introduction of the fee benchmarks and hopes that more procedures will be included over time and with each update. ◆

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