

Pricing of Medicines

Extracted from SMA publication, "The Medical Profession & Pharmaceuticals" November 1998, page 11-12.

Dispensed In-Clinic & Prescription Fees

1. MEDICINE FEES

Prices comparable to those charged at a pharmacy are an acceptable upper limit. When this is not known, the following are some suggested acceptable alternatives.

1. When the price of the medicine is listed in a drug index such as DIMS, the list price of the single-user pack size can be used.
2. When the above is not available, the list price quoted by the manufacturer or the distributor can be used. When this list price is not available, up to 1.25 times the nett price for the single-user pack size is acceptable.
3. Where neither the list nor nett prices of the single-user pack size is available (eg. bulk-packed medicine), up to twice the per-unit cost of bulk-packed medicine is acceptable.

4. For very low-cost medicine, a rounding up to 10 cents per tablet/capsule, \$1.50 per 5g of cream, or \$1.50 per 30ml of mixture, is acceptable. Alternatively, a rounded-up charge of \$2 per each medicine dispensed, for up to a week, is acceptable.

Summary of methods of calculating Medicine Charge, in order of preference.

1. Pharmacy Price
2. DIMS List Price
3. Manufacturer's/Distributor's List Price
4. 1.25 x Nett Price
5. 2 x Bulk-packed Price
6. Rounded-up Price or Charge-per-item Price

2. PRESCRIPTION FEES

Under ordinary circumstances, prescribing is part of the in-clinic consultation, and

no separate prescription fee should be charged. This applies even if the patient requests during the consultation that the medicine be dispensed outside the clinic.

However, a prescription fee may be appropriate when the patient is not physically present for a formal consultation and examination, as a professional review of his medical records before prescribing medicine is appropriate. One example may be when a relative requests repeat medicine for a stable housebound patient of the doctor. Another is when clinical or laboratory data needs to be reviewed before a repeat prescription. In such cases, a prescription fee of up to \$10 for up to a month's supply of medicine is acceptable, provided the usual consultation fee is not charged. ■

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pursuits like the humanities where entire social movements (say postmodernism) can be well described before even getting into the specifics of what constitutes their individual facets (say the postmodernist novel or skyscraper).

This is highlighted by the fact that almost all standard textbooks present facts vertically, though in practice, such knowledge is applied horizontally. Certainly there are many good 'problem oriented' books which go some way to addressing this vertical/horizontal dilemma. But there is nothing like a good tutor to show you the ropes and most importantly, tell you which paragraphs to skip, the voluminous books to keep away from, and what you do not have to know. Which brings me to the next point.

THE TERM PROFESSOR IS A JOB DESCRIPTION

I came from a secondary school where we called all male teachers sir, and the ladies madam. Something about teaching young men to be scholars, officers and gentleman. A laudable effort certainly, but it did not make us respect them

more, though it did save us the effort of remembering actual names.

In the same way, you'd meet Prof this and Prof that at tutorials and lectures. Don't be overawed by titles. Having a academic one does not make them better doctors or more importantly, better people. What is better anyway? So judge them worthy of respect as you would any other man. You would want them to judge you similarly.

Your tutors were once medical students too although some might talk as if they went straight from diapers to gene sequencing. Try not to be too harsh on them, they might be working for you someday.

GET TO KNOW MANAGEMENT CONSULTANTS AND INVESTMENT BANKERS

It is never too early to find out what the rest of your former classmates will be doing. And especially, how much they will be earning. Once you accept the fact that people you 'outperformed' all through school will have expense accounts more than your monthly salary, working life will be less frustrating. You will feel less disgruntled about night

calls that seem to stretch into eternity, and our civil service medical benefits.

Perhaps you can then tell the corporate types all about the intangibles they are missing out on, despite the frequent flyer privileges and 6 month bonuses. Failing which you can of course take an MBA and join a dot.com.

GO FORTH

"Be careful whose advice you buy, but be patient with those who supply it. Advice is a form of nostalgia. Dispensing it is a way of fishing the past from the disposal, wiping it off, painting over the ugly parts and recycling it for more than it's worth."

So ends the 'song'. Each of you will have your own song soon. But allow me to leave you with some suggestions on what to do during your first term in medschool, the really crucial stuff.

- Don't rush to buy any textbook you can borrow.
- Start brushing up on your Hokkien and Malay.
- Get one of those '11th free after 10 coffees' cards from Spinellis at the Science Canteen.

And remember to have fun. ■