

Out-of-pocket costs for referred services

What the Standards say

The RACGP *Standards for general practices* (5th edition) require practices to advise patients before making a referral or requesting investigations that may attract an out-of-pocket cost.

C1.5 ► B Our patients are informed that there are potential out-of-pocket costs for referred services.

You must:

- let the patient know when you are making a referral or requesting investigations that there may be a cost for the service. You do not need to know the exact cost.

You could:

- provide the contact details of the referred service provider so the patient can find out about the costs for that service
- develop a contact list of local service providers that you can give patients so that they can find out about costs and select the service provider of their choice.

Rationale

Disclosing costs that a patient may incur at the outset may assist that patient in making an informed decision about their own healthcare.

If a patient indicates, or you know or suspect, that the costs associated with a proposed referral or test may be problematic, you should discuss alternative approaches, such as making a referral to public services.

How could we demonstrate that we meet this Criterion?

A practice can:

- maintain a policy regarding referred and investigative services
- provide evidence that out-of-pocket costs for referred and investigative services are regularly discussed by members of the practice team
- develop a contact list of local service providers that will allow patients to select the provider of their choice
- describe the process for making referrals and requesting investigations, including
 - advising patients that a referral or request for investigation may attract an out-of-pocket cost before proceeding with this course of action
 - explaining the extent to which the service may be covered by Medicare, and whether the patient can expect to pay a gap or private fee
 - providing patients with the contact details of the referred service provider
 - encouraging patients to contact the service provider for the exact cost details of such services.

You do not need to know, or provide patients with, the exact costs of referred and investigative services.

Contact standards@racgp.org.au for further information.