

ADDRESS LETTERS TO

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The opinions expressed by correspondents in this column are in no way endorsed by either the Editors or The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners

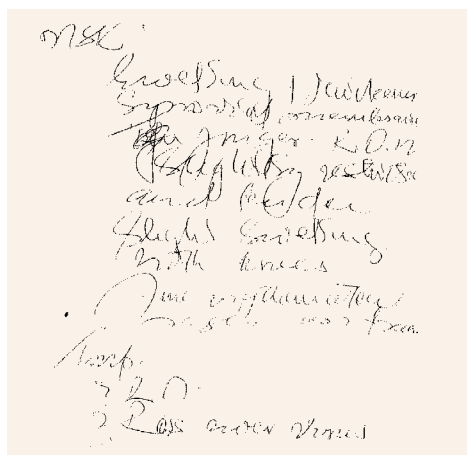
Illegible documents and public hospitals

Dear Editor

Am I alone in being very dissatisfied at receiving handwritten documents, including discharge summaries, from local public hospitals? The degree of legibility varies, but given that I type all my letters, I find it quite unacceptable that young medical staff, all with IT skills, do not do the same.

I have been writing letters to this effect to all hospitals concerned for several years now, so far without detectable improvement. I regard this as an important issue with medicolegal implications.

To graphically illustrate the point, I have supplied a copy of a recent extreme example of illegibility with identification removed.



Rob Mathew
Pier Street Medical Centre
RACGP Victoria General Practice of the Year 2008

'implementation of a management plan' includes counselling services...[and] advice to patients'.

Phillip Gray
Queanbeyan, NSW

Reply

Dear Editor

Dr Gray is correct in that the descriptor for MBS Item 36 contains more information than what was provided in Appendix 3 of the March 2009 **check** unit.

The MBS item descriptors listed in the appendices were provided as a reference guide only and by no means should be used as a replacement for the complete MBS item descriptors. The descriptors were shortened for editorial purposes.

The full descriptor for Item 36 is, '...Professional attendance involving taking a detailed history, an examination of multiple systems, arranging any necessary investigations and implementing a management plan in relation to one or more problems, and lasting at least 20 minutes, OR a professional attendance of less than 40 minutes duration involving components of a service to which item 44, 47, 48, 50 or 51 applies'.

Practitioners should always refer to the current MBS for complete item descriptors. The complete MBS is available on the Department of Health and Ageing's website at www.health.gov.au/mbsonline.

Medicare Australia values feedback from its readers and appreciates the time taken to provide this.

Robert Menz
Health Advisory Branch
Medicare Australia

'Check' the details

Dear Editor

The fact that the Professional Services Review has been guilty of quoting selectively from Medicare Benefits Schedule (MBS) item descriptors in a way that is intimidating to GPs has been discussed in the medical press and highlighted by the Australian Medical Association (AMA). How disappointing to see the March edition of **check** (Unit 444, Chronic Disease Management, Appendix 3) perpetuating this practice.

For the record, the full descriptor for MBS Item 36 includes, '...OR a professional attendance of less than 40 minutes duration involving components of a service to which item 44 ...applies' and the clarifying note (A5) states, '...[Level D] items also cover cases which need prolonged discussion... For items 23 to 51