**Non-NHS- Fees**

**Frequently Asked Questions**

**Why do GPs charge fees?  Isn't the NHS supposed to be free?**

The National Health Service provides most health care to most people free of charge, but there are exceptions.  Prescription charges have existed since 1951, and there are a number of other services for which fees are charged.  Sometimes the charge is made to cover some of the cost of treatment, for example, dental fees.  In other cases it is because the service is not covered by the NHS, for example, medical reports for insurance companies, claim forms for referral for private care and other letters and forms which require the doctor to review the patient's medical records.

**Who decides how much the fees are?**

As these are fees for non-NHS work, GP’s can charge whatever fees they choose. Our fees are based on the BMA (British Medical Association) recommendations.

**Surely the doctor is being paid anyway?**

GPs are not employed by the NHS, they are self-employed, and they have to cover their costs - staff, buildings, heating, lighting etc - in the same way as any small business.  The NHS pays the doctor for specific NHS work, but for non-NHS work the fee has to cover the doctor's costs.

**What is covered by the NHS and what is not?**

The government's contract with GPs covers medical services to NHS patients.  In recent years, more and more organisations have been involving doctors in a whole range of non-medical work.  Sometimes the only reason that GPs are asked is because they are in a position of trust in the community, or because an insurance company or employer wants to be sure that information provided is true and accurate.

**Examples of non-NHS services for which GPs can charge their NHS patients are:**

Certain travel vaccinations
Private medical insurance reports
Holiday cancellation claim forms
Referral for private care forms
Letters requested by, or on behalf of, the patient

**Examples of non-NHS services for which GPs can charge other institutions are:**

Medical reports for insurance companies
Some reports for the DSS/Benefits Agency
Examinations of local authority employees

**Why does it sometimes take my GP a long time to complete my form?**

Time spent completing forms and preparing reports takes the GP away from the medical care of his/her patients.  GPs have a very heavy workload and paperwork takes up an increasing amount of their time. Therefore, it will normally take around 14 days for our GPs to complete such requests.

**Can I make a short notice request?**

The Practice are unable to guarantee completion if the deadline is unreasonable such as completion within 48hrs or if their Usual GP is absent and no available GP has prior knowledge/seen the patient before in order to complete the request at short notice.

**I only need the doctor's signature - what is the problem?**

When a doctor signs a certificate or completes a report, it is a condition of remaining on the Medical Register that they only sign what they know to be true.  Therefore, in order to complete even the simplest of forms, the doctor needs to check the patient's entire medical record.  Carelessness or an inaccurate report can have serious consequences for the doctor, with the General Medical Council or even the Police becoming involved.

**What will I be charged?**

The BMA recommends that GPs tell patients in advance if they will be charged, and how much.  However, it is up to the individual practice to decide how much to charge. We benchmark our charges against the BMA recommendations and/or National Averages.