



Oifig an Stiúrthóra Cúnta Náisiúnta
Clár Cúraim Pobail Feabhsaithe &
Conarthaí Príomhchúraim
Feidhmeannacht na Seirbhíse Sláinte
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Deputy Louise O'Reilly,
Dáil Éireann,
Leinster House,
Dublin 2.

14th June, 2022

PQ 23165/22 -To ask the Minister for Health the awareness campaigns that are in place to advise patients with medical cards of the circumstances in relation to phlebotomy services charges; the way that patients are informed that they can make a complaint and seek a refund; and if he will make a statement on the matter. -Louise O'Reilly

Dear Louise O' Reilly,

Routine blood tests are comprehended under the General Medical Services (GMS) contract and therefore should be provided free of charge to GMS patients.

Under the GMS Contract Medical Practitioners shall provide eligible patients with "all proper and necessary treatment of a kind usually undertaken by a general practitioner and not requiring special skill or experience of a degree or kind which general practitioners cannot reasonably be expected to possess". Routine blood tests, which are deemed clinically necessary by the patient's GP are comprehended by this scope of service. In addition, the GMS contract sets out that a medical practitioner shall not demand or accept any payments of consideration whatsoever in reward for services provided by him/her, or for travelling or for other expenses incurred by him/her or for the use of any premises, equipment or instruments in making the services available.

The position of the Department of Health and the HSE is that routine blood tests in primary care are covered under this element of the GMS Contract; separately the Acute Hospital system also provides for phlebotomy services for patients who have been referred by GPs or through Emergency Departments.

It is of course a matter for the treating GP to determine in the case of each individual patient what is proper and necessary care. In circumstances where a GP, in the exercise of his/her clinical judgement, determines that a particular treatment or service requested by a patient is not clinically necessary but the patient still wishes to receive same, it is at the GPs discretion as to whether he/she imposes a charge for providing the service/treatment in question. An example of this might be an asymptomatic patient about whom the GP does not have any clinical concerns requesting a general health screening. Consultation fees charged by GPs outside the terms of the GMS contracts are a matter of private contract between the clinicians and their patients. The HSE does not have any role in relation to the regulation of such fees.



The HSE continues to deal with complaints from GMS patients on a case by case basis and will, where appropriate, arrange for a refund of charges incorrectly applied by the GP and re-coup the value of same from payments due to the GP under the relevant GMS Contract. If a GMS patient holds a medical card or GP visit card believes and believes that he/she has been incorrectly charged for routine Phlebotomy services, he/she can make a complaint to the HSE local office who will deal with the matter.

Yours sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink, appearing to read 'G. Crowley', with a horizontal line underneath.

**Geraldine Crowley,
Assistant National Director,
Enhanced Community Care Programme &
Primary Care Contracts**