Theatre On-Call Rates – New Revised Payments to Nurses

Clarifications to DoHC Circular 33/2003

Background

The nursing unions sought an increase in on-call payments for theatre nurses. The claim was served in the context of Labour Court Recommendation 16261, which issued in August 1999. The Court had stated that discussion could take place locally regarding on-call payments in instances of excessive on-call.

Local agreements were made in St Colmcilles Hospital, Louglinstown and at Waterford Regional Hospital. On foot of the latter agreement the unions sought to have the Waterford rate extended throughout out the country.

Following a number of work-to-rules, agreement was finally reached in the Labour Relations Commission on 25th February 2003.

The effect of the agreement provides new on-call rates for theatre nurses. The arrangements in Loughlinstown and Waterford remain unaltered, and apply on a red-circled basis in those two hospitals only.

The Agreement

DoHC Circular 33/2003 outlining the terms of the agreement is attached and is effective from 6th January 2003.

General Comment

The revised payment schedule is intended to compensate theatre nurses for excessive on-call liability. However, this schedule does not prohibit management from engaging with staff representatives with a view to introducing a rostered out-of-hours working arrangement, where out-of-hours activity levels justify such an arrangement. In the main routine and scheduled procedures should not be undertaken by on-call teams.

If there are situations where a number of procedures are being performed within the two-hour span, the continuation of an emergency on-call arrangement in such instances should be examined. Such a pattern of activity might require a move to rostered working to effect cost efficiencies. Onerous on-call should be the exception rather than the rule.

Clarifications

Please note the following clarifications, which may be of assistance.

1. The fee per operation is a two hourly rate up to 22.00hrs, irrespective of whether the operation is for ½ hour or 1½ hours. Any procedure that exceeds the two hour duration between the hours of 17.00 and 22.00 will

have the hourly rate of €17.83 applied for each subsequent hour or part thereof.

2. An operation which commences after 22.00hrs will be paid at a rate of €35.68 per hour or part thereof.

3. Any operation commencing before 22.00hrs will be paid in accordance with the pre 22.00hrs pay arrangement e.g. for an operation commencing at 21.00hrs and finishing at 23.30hrs, the two hourly rate will apply up to 22.00hrs and the hourly rate thereafter.

4. Fee per hour is the minimum payment i.e. pro rata does not apply.

5. The hourly payments apply from the start of the procedure to the conclusion of all activities associated with the procedure.

6. The duration of on-call does not effect the payment of the co-ordinator allowance. This allowance is paid to a staff nurse who fulfils specified duties when called in. The allowance is only paid when the staff nurse is required and agrees to take on additional specific duties as referred to in the attached DoHC Circular.

7. In future, as provided for under the agreement, all overruns will be paid at overtime rates. Nurses cannot opt for an on-call rate and time back. The same level of service that was provided under the old arrangements is expected under the new arrangements.

8. Telephone rental was sought but not conceded as part of the overall settlement.

9. One fee per operation will apply in a multi organ donor situation.

10. The rate for on-call without standby of €71.36 represents the agreed fee per operation.