

AUTOMATIC MEDICAL CARD ELIGIBILITY FOR PERSONS AGE 70 AND OVER

Title: Automatic Medical Card Eligibility for Persons age 70 and Over

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From Department of Health and Children

To: Chief Executive Officer of Each Health Board

Re: Automatic medical card eligibility for persons aged 70 and over

Dear CEO

The following sets out the terms of an Agreement reached between the Health Services Employers Agency and the Irish Medical Organisation on 28 June 2001 on matters relating to the above and the General Medical Services Scheme. The terms of the Agreement should, as appropriate, be incorporated into the applicable contract for services.

Capitation

Pursuant to the Health (Miscellaneous Provisions) Act 2001, a capitation rate to be paid (without calibration for distance) of £345 per annum in respect of all persons aged 70 years or more in the community acquiring a medical card for the first time on or after 1 July 2001.

Private Nursing Homes For the Elderly (approved by the Health Board)

A capitation rate of £500 per annum (or £10 per week) will apply in respect of persons aged 70 or more in private nursing homes (approved by Health Boards) for continuous periods in excess of five weeks.

This payment will not be applicable in any situation where the doctor involved receives a payment from the nursing home in respect of such patients or is in any way remunerated for such persons by the State or otherwise, for example, by insurance cover.

For the avoidance of any doubt, the terms and payments specified under the above headings of **Capitation and Private Nursing Homes For the Elderly (approved by the Health Board)** or any other **GMS Scheme** agreement will not be applicable in respect of any medical card holder in a State medical, nursing or care facility where medical services are provided in-house.

Rural Practice Allowances

An increase in the Rural Practice Allowance of £2000.

Practice Nurses & Secretaries

A weighting of 3:1 for any person aged 70 or more on a contracted doctor's panel in terms of calculating panel size for Practice Nurse and/or Secretary allowance. Given the potential long term cost that may arise over time in the general area of Practice Nurses and Secretaries this whole area will be fully examined in the primary care review.

Entry to the GMS Scheme

A one-off entry arrangement for doctors to the GMS Scheme which gives right of entry to any fully qualified and approved vocationally trained general practitioner (meeting the general conditions relating to eligibility for appointment to the GMS Scheme) who is in practice on 1 July 2001, such a person having been in practice for a period of 1 whole year immediately prior to that date (or

has, on or before that date, entered into a partnership with or a legally binding contract to acquire a practice from an existing practitioner or practitioners. This right of entry to be limited for a period of five years to the acceptance of such medical card patients as acquire their medical cards under the new eligibility provision. However, in the case of a person in a partnership on the date he acquires limited entry that five years period will be reduced to two years if he continues in that partnership for the period of two years.

After the period on limited entry has passed, the doctor concerned will be free to accept any medical card patient nominating him or her as their doctor of choice. This provision is subject to the normal rules of good character and suitable premises and does not restrict or affect other existing rules on entry. Further, persons having limited contracts under this provision will enjoy appropriate benefits determined on a pro rata basis. Where anomalies or issues of interpretation arise under this term, they should be subject to joint examination by the parties to this Agreement.

Pensions ~Additional Voluntary Contributions

The Irish Medical Organisation wished it to be recorded that their agreement is predicated on the basis that the matters of tax efficient AVCs and ring fenced relevant income be addressed to a satisfactory resolution as a matter of urgency. The Department of Health & Children stated, and this was accepted by the IMO, that it is not within its remit to guarantee such an outcome. The Department did undertake, however, to positively facilitate discussions with the Revenue Commissioners and the Department of Finance on this matter. The IMO will be fully advised of the outcome of these talks and retains the right to withdraw from this Agreement if the matter is not progressed satisfactorily.

Working Group

The parties agreed to the establishment of a working group to clarify the implementation of certain matters previously agreed.

Statement by the IMO

The IMO wanted it recorded, as part of the Agreement, that they regarded the matter of medical card eligibility as an important one relevant not just to their members but also to the general public good and in that context requested that the Government invite them to contribute directly to any decision-making processes relevant to this area.

Administrative Aspects of this Agreement

The terms of the Agreement, unless otherwise stated, have effect from 1 July 2001. However, in view of the date on which this Agreement was concluded and the commencement of the legislative provision introducing automatic medical card eligibility for persons aged 70 and over, it is clear that it will not be possible to have all the necessary administrative arrangements in place to ensure either the issue of medical cards to all benefiting persons or the full implementation of the terms of this Agreement from that date. Accordingly, and on a transitional basis only (not to exceed 31 December 2001) the parties further agree that the terms of this Agreement will, in appropriate cases, including for payment purposes, have retrospective effect to 1 July or such later date as is relevant in the circumstances.

Any queries in relation to this Circular should be made to the GMS Division.

Eamon Corcoran
Principal
GMS Division
3 August 2001