



Department of Health,
P.O. Box 5013,
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20 February 1978.

CLINICAL SERVICES LETTER No. 176

To Medical Practitioners

LABORATORY DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES BENEFIT

The Cabinet has approved amendments to the Laboratory Diagnostic Services Benefit and the revised schedule became effective on 1 January 1978. The revision of the schedule gives effect to recommendations of the Laboratory Services Advisory Committee: obsolete tests have been deleted, new tests added, and the fees for some tests, particularly those in the Haematology Section, have been increased. The extra cost in a full year is expected to be \$2 million.

The upgrading of tests already on the schedule is a new departure; in the case of the Haematology Section, fee levels had remained unchanged since the laboratory benefit was introduced. Although laboratories had been able to make economies in some areas through the introduction of computer-based techniques, some fees had fallen below the cost of performing the tests.

The upgraded tests in the Haematology Section are as follows:

	Old Fee	New Fee
	\$	\$
A1 Complete blood count	1.50	5.00
A2 Haemoglobin estimation	0.50	1.50
A3 Red cell count or packed cell volume	0.50	1.50
A4 White cell count, differential white cell count, and/ or blood film	0.50	2.00
A6 Blood sedimentation rate	0.50	1.00
A10 Blood prothrombin test	1.50	3.00

The new fees are, of course, reflected also in the corresponding group tests.

New tests which have been added to the schedule are:

C39 Blood porphyrins (quantitative)	4.00
C41 Blood or serum levels of digoxin or dilantin	5.00
H7 (d) Anti-bacterial substances in urine	0.50
I14 Hepatitis associated antigen	1.00
J3 Frozen section and/or smear during surgery	12.00

Since the last amendment to the Laboratory Diagnostic Services Benefit in October 1972, expenditure has grown at an average of 13 percent a year; from \$7.9 million in 1973/74 to \$12.136 million in 1976/77. With no change in the benefit rates, the increased expenditure reflects the higher demand for tests.

The Pathology Services Working Party in Australia recently considered all aspects of the scheme in that country and recommended, in view of the spiralling cost of the benefit, that "practitioners initiating pathology services be accountable to a group of their colleagues, if so asked, that the pathology services were reasonably necessary for the adequate medical care of their patients". While it is preferable to leave practitioners to regulate their ordering of tests, it may be necessary to consider making a similar provision in this country to enable some form of peer-review to be undertaken.

If medical manpower predictions are correct there will be a 40 percent increase in the number of medical practitioners in the next few years and the number in general practice will rise in particular. The rate of growth in expenditure on laboratory services must therefore accelerate. The cost to the taxpayer of these tests, especially multiple tests, needs to be kept in mind when they are requested. Professor P. J. Scott's comments in Therapeutic Notes No. 166 of 20 February 1978 are particularly pertinent.

A complete and up-to-date Schedule of Fees is enclosed for reference purposes.

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APPENDIX

SCHEDULE OF FEES FOR LABORATORY DIAGNOSTIC SERVICES IN RELATION TO THE SOCIAL SECURITY (LABORATORY DIAGNOSTIC) REGULATIONS 1946

HAEMATOLOGY

Code Reference	Title	Fee \$	Changed or New Tests*
A. 1	Complete blood count (red and white cells, haemoglobin, PCV, differential leucocyte count, and/or blood film	5.00	*
A. 2	Haemoglobin estimation	1.50	*

HAEMATOLOGY—continued

Code Reference	Title	Fee \$	Changed or New Tests*
A. 3	Red cell count or packed cell volume	1.50	*
A. 4	White cell count, differential white cell count, and/or blood film	2.00	*
A. 6	Blood sedimentation rate	1.00	*
A. 7	Platelet count	0.50	
A. 8	Bleeding time	0.50	
A. 9 (a)	Thrombin clotting time	1.00	
A. 9 (b)	Clot retraction (semi-quantitative)	0.50	*
A. 10	Blood prothrombin test	3.00	*
A. 11 (a)	Red cell fragility	2.00	
A. 11 (b)	Red cell autohaemolysis	4.00	
A. 12	Reticulocytes, siderocytes, Heinz bodies, etc.	0.50	
A. 13	L.E. cell test	2.00	
A. 14	Bone marrow examination	4.00	
A. 15	Coagulation factor (individual assay)	2.00	*
A. 17	Partial thromboplastin time or kaolin clotting time	2.50	
A. 18	Red cell or white cell enzymes	2.00	
A. 19	Measurement of red cell mass	5.00	
A. 20	Chromosome analysis (for Philadelphia chromosome or similar abnormality)	3.00	

BLOOD GROUPING

B. 1	A.B.O. series	0.50	
B. 2	Rhesus group	0.50	
B. 3	Coomb's test	1.00	
B. 4	Rhesus titre	2.00	
B. 5	Rhesus phenotyping	2.00	
B. 6	Serum screening for antibodies—antenatal	2.00	
B. 7	Donath Landsteiner test	1.00	

GENERAL BIOCHEMISTRY

C. 1	Urea or urea nitrogen	1.00	*
C. 2	Glucose (or other sugar)	1.00	
C. 3	Chlorides or bromides	1.50	
C. 4	CO ₂ combining power, bicarbonate, or pCO ₂ (one only)	2.00	
C. 5	Bile pigments	1.00	
C. 6 (a)	Cholesterol	2.00	
C. 6 (b)	Total lipids	2.00	
C. 6 (c)	Serum and triglycerides and other lipid fractions (each at)	2.00	
C. 7	Uric acid	2.00	
C. 8	Calcium	2.00	

GENERAL BIOCHEMISTRY—continued

Code Reference	Title	Fee \$	Changed or New Tests*
C. 9	Phosphorus	2.00	
C. 10	Iron and iron binding capacity	4.00	*
C. 12	Sodium	2.00	
C. 13	Potassium	2.00	
C. 14	Acid phosphatase	2.00	
C. 15	Alkaline phosphatase	2.00	
C. 16	Creatinine	1.00	
C. 17	Diastase	1.00	
C. 18	Transaminase—		
	(a) SGOT	2.00	
	(b) SGPT	2.00	
C. 19	Similar enzymes	2.00	
C. 20	Total proteins	1.00	
C. 21	Electrophoretic pattern of proteins	2.00	*
C. 22	Haemoglobin pigments—		
	(a) Qualitative (including Hams' acid serum test, Schumm's test)	1.00	
	(b) Quantitative (including chemical methods of estimating abnormal haemoglobins and haptoglobins	2.00	
C. 23	Protein bound iodine or T4 or thyroxine	4.00	*
C. 24	Magnesium	2.00	
C. 25	Serum vitamin B12	4.00	
C. 26	Serum folic acid	4.00	
C. 27 (a)	Fibrinogen (semi-quantitative)	2.00	
C. 27 (b)	Fibrinogen screening	1.00	
C. 28	T ₃ I ¹³¹ , red cell or resin uptake, or equivalent	2.00	
C. 29 (a)	Immunoglobulins (quantitative) per fraction	1.50	*
	Maximum	4.50	
C. 29 (b)	Immunoelectrophoresis, per patient	2.00	
C. 30	Blood pH	2.00	
C. 31	Blood ammonia	3.00	
C. 32	Serum carotene	2.00	
C. 33	Cryoglobulins (semi-quantitative)	2.00	
C. 34	pO ₂	2.00	
C. 35	Lithium	2.00	
C. 36	Serum barbiturate	4.00	
C. 37	Serum pyruvate	2.50	
C. 38	Blood alcohol for diagnostic purposes	4.00	
C. 39	Blood porphyrins (quantitative)	4.00	*
C. 41	Blood or serum levels of digoxin or dilantin	5.00	*

URINE BIOCHEMISTRY

Code Reference	Title	Fee \$	Changed or New Tests*
D. 1	Urine 17—ketosteroids	4.00	
D. 2	Urine adrenocortical steroids	4.00	
D. 3	Bence-Jones protein in urine	1.00	
D. 4	Urine porphyrins (quantitative)	4.00	*
D. 5	Urine porphobilinogen	1.00	*
D. 6 (a)	Catecholamines (qualitative)	1.00	
D. 6 (b)	Catecholamines (quantitative)	4.00	
D. 7	Vanilmandelic acid	4.00	
D. 8	Chorionic gonadotrophin	4.00	
D. 9	Urinary amino acid chromatography	2.00	
D. 10	Hydroxy indolacetic acid	4.00	
D. 11	Oestriol	4.00	
D. 12	Urinary calculus analysis	2.00	

FAECES BIOCHEMISTRY

F. 1	Faeces fat—		
	(a) Qualitative	0.50	
	(b) Quantitative	4.00	
F. 2	Faeces occult blood	0.50	
F. 3	Faeces porphyrins (quantitative)	4.00	*
F. 4	Faeces trypsin (quantitative)	1.50	

BIOCHEMICAL FUNCTION TESTS

G. 1	Urine concentration and dilution tests	1.00	
G. 3	Creatinine clearance test	2.00	
G. 4	Gastric analysis: augmented histamine test or equivalent	4.00	*
G. 5	Gastric analysis: quinine excretion or similar test	2.00	
G. 7	Bromsulphthalein retention	4.00	
G. 11	Xylose absorption test	4.00	

BACTERIOLOGY: DIRECT EXAMINATIONS AND CULTURES

H. 1 (a)	Direct microscopic examination with or without stain (including leucocyte counts in biological fluids)	1.00	
H. 1 (b)	Direct microscopic examination with dark ground illumination	2.00	
H. 1 (c)	Direct microscopic examination after digestion or concentration	2.00	
H. 2	Routine <i>primary</i> culture per specimen	2.00	
H. 3	Special <i>additional</i> cultural procedures (gonococci, diphtheria organisms, anaerobes, etc.)	1.50	
H. 4	Colony counts by dilution techniques	2.00	

BACTERIOLOGY: DIRECT EXAMINATIONS AND CULTURES— *continued*

Code Reference	Title	Fee \$	Changed or New Tests*
H. 5 (a)	T.B. culture	4.00	*
H. 5 (b)	Blood culture	6.00	*
H. 6	Identification of bacterial species from routine culture by—		
	(a) Enzyme or biochemical test—		
	Each test	0.50	
	Maximum	2.00	
	(b) Serological identification—		
	Each culture—slide method	0.50	
	Each culture—tube method	1.00	
H. 7 (a)	Qualitative chemotherapeutic sensitivity test—		
	Each agent	0.50	
	Maximum per organism	1.50	
H. 7 (b)	Quantitative (tube or plate dilution) chemothera- peutic sensitivity test—		
	Each agent	1.00	
	Maximum per organism	3.00	
H. 7 (c)	Special chemotherapeutic tests, e.g., serum assays; patients serum v. own organism; antibiotic com- binations	4.00	
H. 7 (d)	Anti-bacterial substances in urine	0.50	*
H. 8	Toxin tests	4.00	
H. 9	Seminal fluid fertility check	2.00	
H. 10	Animal inoculation	4.00	

BACTERIOLOGY: SEROLOGY AND SKIN SENSITIVITY TESTS

I. 1	Mantoux Tests—		
	Single test	1.50	
	Multiple tests over three, each	0.50	
I. 2	Skin sensitivity tests	2.00	
I. 3	Casoni test	2.00	
I. 4	Heterophile antibody (Paul-Bunnell)—		
	(a) Screening (slide)	0.50	
	(b) Presumptive	1.00	
	(c) Presumptive and confirmatory	3.00	
I. 5	Tests for syphilis and gonorrhoea—		
	(a) Fluorescent treponemal test	3.00	
	(b) Complement fixation test	1.00	
	(c) Flocculation or precipitation test	0.50	

BACTERIOLOGY: SEROLOGY AND SKIN SENSITIVITY TESTS— *continued*

Code Reference	Title	Fee \$	Changed or New Tests*
I. 6	Tests for hydatids—		
	(a) Hydatid haemagglutination test	2.00	
	(b) Hydatid latex test	1.00	
	(c) Hydatid complement fixation test	1.00	
I. 7	Serological tests for auto-immune diseases—		
	(a) Screen test	1.00	
	(b) Titre	2.00	
	(c) Immunofluorescent antigen antibody detection (each)	3.00	
I. 8 (a)	Antistreptolysin titre	2.00	
I. 8 (b)	Anti-hyaluronidase test	2.00	
I. 9	C-reactive protein test	0.50	
I. 10 (a)	Agglutination against organisms such as typhoid group or brucella group—		
	Single organism	1.00	
	Maximum	2.00	*
I. 10 (b)	Brucella complement fixation test	1.00	
I. 11	Leptospira agglutination	4.00	
I. 12 (a)	Toxoplasma dye or haemagglutination test	2.00	
I. 12 (b)	Toxoplasma complement fixation test	1.00	
I. 12 (c)	Toxoplasma latex test	1.00	
I. 13	Other complement fixation tests (psittacosis, etc.)	1.00	
I. 14	Hepatitis associated antigen	1.00	*

MORBID HISTOLOGY AND CYTOLOGY

J. 1	Histological examination per case—		
	1. Single specimen (minor)	4.00	
	2. Two specimens (intermediate)	8.00	
	3. Three or more specimens (major)	12.00	
	4. Frozen section (extra)	4.00	
J. 2	Cytological examination—		
	(a) Cervical smears (per case)	1.50	
	(b) Other cytological examinations	3.00	
J. 3	Frozen section and/or smear during surgery	12.00	*

GROUP TESTS

K. 1.	Liver function tests—	Reduced Fee \$
	(a) Bilirubin	0.80
	(b) Alkaline phosphatase	1.60
	(c) SGOT	1.60
	(d) SGPT	1.60
	(e) Protein + electrophoresis	2.40

GROUP TESTS—continued

Code Reference	Title	Changed	
		Reduced or Fee \$	New Tests*
K. 2	Myocardial enzymes—		
	(a) SGOT	1.60	
	(b) LDH	1.60	
	(c) CPK	1.60	
K. 3	Electrolytes—		
	(a) Sodium	1.60	
	(b) Potassium	1.60	
	(c) Chlorides	1.20	
K. 4	Lipid tests—		
	(a) Cholesterol	1.60	
	(b) Triglycerides	1.60	
K. 5	Thyroid function tests—		
	(a) Protein bound iodine or equivalent	3.20	
	(b) T ₃ resin uptake	1.60	
K. 6	Antenatal group—		
	(a) Hb	1.20	*
	(b) PCV	1.20	*
	(c) Blood film	1.60	*
	(d) Antibodies	1.60	
	(e) ABO	0.40	
	(f) Rh blood group	0.40	
	(g) WR or other screening test for syphilis	0.80	
K. 7	Neonatal group—		
	(a) Hb	1.20	*
	(b) PCV	1.20	*
	(c) Blood film	1.60	*
	(d) Coombs	0.80	
	(e) Bilirubin	0.80	
	(f) ABO	0.40	
	(g) Rh blood group	0.40	
K. 8	Coagulation screen—		
	(a) Complete blood count	4.00	*
	(b) Platelets	0.40	
	(c) Prothrombin estimation	2.40	*
	(d) PTTK	2.00	
	(e) Bleeding time and thrombin clotting time	1.20	

Division of Clinical Services.

January 1978.