

ADMITTED PATIENT ELECTION FORM INFORMATION FOR PATIENTS

PATIENT ELECTION

Australian residents and certain overseas visitors have the choice to be treated as either a public or private patient in NSW public hospitals. The basic principle involved in a patient making an election is that he or she should freely make an informed decision based on accurate information.

All eligible persons have the choice to be treated as a public (hospital non-chargeable) or private (chargeable) patient regardless of whether or not you have private health insurance ie: you do not have to be treated as a private patient because you have private health insurance. However there are some differences between choosing to be treated as a public or private patient.

If you wish to be treated by a doctor nominated by you, for example a doctor who you have attended outside the hospital, you may do so by choosing to be admitted as a private (chargeable) patient under the care of that doctor (and any other doctors whom he/she may call into consultation to assist in your care).

You may select as your private doctor the medical practitioner on call and be admitted under the care of that doctor as a private patient.

Alternatively, you may choose to be admitted as a public (hospital non-chargeable) patient and the hospital will nominate a doctor or doctors to care for you.

A patient election form is to be completed by all admitted patients except those who have completed separate forms such as Declaration of Overseas Residence, or of Coverage by Workers Compensation, Third Party Insurance or Department of Veterans Affairs or other compensable Acts. It may be completed at the hospital or prior to that in your Doctor's surgery.

By completing an election form you are making an election (choice) to be admitted as a public or private patient. Your election may only be changed as a result of unforeseen circumstances. Your choice will affect which doctor treats you while you are in hospital and the fees, if any, you will be responsible for paying.

It should be noted that even though you complete an election form as an eligible patient, if you are later found to be eligible for compensation under Workers Compensation, Third Party insurance or under any other type of arrangement (and therefore not eligible under Medicare arrangements), you will be reclassified as compensable and be charged accordingly.

You should also make sure you are familiar with your rights and responsibilities as a patient of a NSW public hospital. This information is contained in the pamphlet "You and Your Health Service" which is available from your local public hospital or Area Health Service.

The election is to be completed by you (the patient) or on your behalf by a responsible person that is legally entitled to make decisions about your health care (usually spouse, parent or other relative). When you have completed the form it must be witnessed by a hospital employee (eg: admission clerk) who will certify this on the form.

A. Private (Chargeable)

- You will have a private contract for care by the doctor selected and with other doctors, whom you and he/she select to assist in your care. These doctors will charge you for services rendered. You will also be charged for all diagnostic and pathology services
- Your post-discharge care will ordinarily be carried out by the doctor you have selected in his or her consulting rooms.
- You will be able to claim on Medicare for all medical expenses incurred including diagnostics and pathology. Medicare will refund 75% of Schedule Fee for any single service. If the doctor charges over the schedule fee you will be liable to pay the difference from your own pocket. The private health funds offer a cover for the 25% Medicare gap for those patients so insured.
- You will be charged for prostheses. The private health funds will meet these charges in most instances if basic hospital cover is held.
- You will be charged by the hospital at the Standard Ward rate for shared accommodation or the Single Room rate for single accommodation (if available and if requested) or one of four day only rates depending on type of treatment. Your private health insurance fund will cover you for all, or a substantial part, of the hospital's charges depending on your level of insurance cover.
- If you have private health insurance you should seek advice, prior to admission, from your fund, your doctor and the hospital to confirm the extent to which your health fund will cover all your costs. You will be responsible for meeting those costs not covered by your health insurance.
- It should be noted that hospitals will provide copies of your election form to your private health insurance fund should they request it. If you have any objection to this occurring please notify the hospital. However you should be aware that failure to provide this may result in your health fund not paying benefits for your treatment.

B. Public (Hospital Non-Chargeable)

- You will be treated by a doctor or doctors nominated by the hospital and you will not be charged personally for medical or hospital services.
- Post-discharge care may be carried out in an outpatient clinic or a doctor's

rooms depending on circumstances.

C. Deferred Election

Generally speaking, a patient should fill out an election at or before admission. There are two exceptions to this policy:

a) emergency admissions after hours in hospitals where staff are not available to organise the completion of the election form until the following working day.

b) should a patient be unable to make a valid election at the time of admission because of:

- unconsciousness
- impaired consciousness
- severe pain
- dementia
- shock
- inability to speak English
- not being accompanied by a responsible relative
- the unavailability of staff to classify the patient
- or other reasons that may inhibit informed decisions.

The process of classification may be deferred until the patient or a responsible relative can complete the process of election.

Patients unable to make an election at the time of admission will be classified as public and treated by a doctor chosen by the hospital until a valid election can be made.

When a valid election is made such an election shall be retrospective to the time of admission to the hospital.

D. Alteration of Election

A valid election can only be changed in the event of unforeseen circumstances. These include but are not limited to:

- Patients who are admitted for a particular procedure but who are found to have complications requiring additional procedures
- Patients whose length of stay has been extended beyond those reasonably planned by an appropriate health care professional
- Patients whose social circumstances change while in hospital for instance a change in income status resulting in an inability to meet hospital and medical bills.

Where a valid election is changed as a result of unforeseen circumstances, the change in status will only be from the date of change onwards. It is not to be retrospectively backdated.

Please note that inadequate private health insurance cover will not normally be considered sufficient reason to alter your election status from private to public. You should check you level of cover with your fund prior to admission and completion of your election.

Source: DOH Circular – 17/10/2001 (Circular No.: 2001/97)