

Frequently Asked Questions

General Queries

- 1. Will there be a prescribed MOH format for the clinics with regard to how they should display the information on fees and charges?**

Clinics are free to design their own format on how the information on fees and charges will be displayed.

- 2. There are no longer SMA's Guidelines on fees for clinics to follow. How do I know whether I am undercharging or overcharging?**

The fees charged should be reasonable and acceptable to the professional community. The Singapore Medical Association has announced that it will be conducting a survey on clinic charges and professional fees, and that the data will be published.

Display of Common Charges

- 3. How should I display and provide the information?**

The clinic charges should be displayed prominently on boards, tent cards or notice printouts, and, if necessary, supplemented with printed pamphlets or brochures. The charging information should be prominently and strategically displayed for the convenience of the patients. Verbal advice should also be given if required.

- 4. What are the common charges that I will have to display?**

Charges for routine services being provided by the clinic should be displayed. Some examples are consultation, health screening, medical report, vaccination charges.

- 5. Must I display the actual charges for consultation, vaccination /immunization, health screening and medical reports?**

Yes, if the charges are standard/fixed. Display of charges in the form of a fee range is acceptable, e.g.

Long consultation	\$X - \$Y
Short consultation	\$X - \$Y
Vaccination/immunization	\$X - \$Y
Health screening	\$X - \$Y
Medical reports	\$X - \$Y

Providing Information on Additional Charges

6. What do you mean by additional charges?

These are for services that the patient may not expect to need initially, but deemed necessary during or after consultation, e.g. lab/x-ray investigation, injection, surgical procedures like toilet and suture.

7. When and how should I provide information on the additional charges?

Such information should be provided before the additional services are rendered (except for emergency cases), either verbally during or at the end of the consultation when the treatment plan is decided.

Bill Itemization

8. What do you mean by bill itemization?

Every patient has to be presented with a bill. The bill must list every service and the amount that the patient is being charged for.

Example of a bill for treatment of fever, cough and cold:

Consultation fee	\$a
Full blood count	\$b
Panadol	\$c
Clarytyn	\$d
Phensedyl	\$e
Total	\$T

9. Must the itemized billing be computerized?

Not necessary. It can be handwritten or a computer printout.

10. Can I bundle the medication charges as one lump sum?

No. You are required to show each and every medication dispensed and the amount charged.

11. If I intend to computerize my system for itemized billing, is there any particular company my clinic could approach?

There are, in the market, a number of clinic management softwares that provide prescription and itemized billing functions.

Corporate and Managed Care Patients

12. Am I still required to issue itemized bill to the patients if the bills are paid fully by the company?

The requirement of bill itemization is to provide greater transparency to the public. It is based on a direct payer principle, i.e. itemized bill should be issued to whoever pays for the healthcare service.

In the instance where a third party/agent pays in full for the healthcare service, the patient need not be issued with an itemized bill. However, as long as the patient co-pays, regardless of the amount, he would have to be issued with an itemized bill.

Audit purpose

13. Must I keep the duplicate copies of the itemized bills?

It is not necessary, as long as the Ministry is satisfied that a system has been put in place to implement bill itemization at the clinic.

14. Can I just state the price of each drug without indicating the unit price such as \$X per tablet?

You have the flexibility on the implementation of the guidelines based on the respective administration and operation of the clinic, so long as the patient knows exactly what he/she is being charged for.

15. If the patient requests, can I just issue summarised receipts instead of itemized bills? This is because the patient does not wish to reveal his/her medical condition to the employer when submitting medical claims for reimbursements.

Bill itemization is to help the public make an informed choice and to provide greater transparency with regards to the fees charged. The guidelines require that bills be itemized, unless patient specifically requested otherwise.

16. Can I show discounts on the itemized bills?

The provision of itemize billings is to help the public make an informed choice about the services at licensed clinics, and also to provide for greater transparency with regards to the fees charged. It is up to the doctor's discretion if he would like to offer discounts to the patient and indicate accordingly in the bills.

Option for filling out Prescriptions

17. How do I inform patients that they can request for a prescription to buy the medicines from any pharmacy of their choice?

You can either inform your patients verbally during consultation or by displaying the information on notices, tent-cards, boards, etc.

18. Is it my responsibility to source a pharmacy for my patients if they request for a prescription to buy medicines from elsewhere?

It is good doctor-patient relationship if you can advise your patients who prefer to fill out the prescriptions where the nearest pharmacy is, or advise where they can obtain the list of registered pharmacies i.e. at the Health Sciences Authority's website:

<http://www.hsa.gov.sg/prism/common/enquirepublic/SearchPharmacy.do?action=load>