

HPCSA releases new tariff guidelines for medical, dental services

Today, 7 August 2012, the Health Professions Council of South Africa (HPCSA) announced the implementation of new Guideline Tariffs in terms of Section 53 of the Health Professions Act (Act No 56 of 1974) that will serve a dual purpose to protect the public and guide healthcare practitioners on the rendering of accounts in terms of the prescribed ethical guidelines on informed consent by ensuring their clients/patients are fully informed about the cost of the potential service to be rendered.



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"Following the scrapping of the HPCSA's Ethical Tariffs in 2008 and the subsequent declaration by the High Court invalidating the National Health Reference Price List, the billing confusion prevalent in the healthcare industry over the last few years necessitated the Council's publication of these Guideline Tariffs," said Dr Buyiswa Mjamba-Matshoba, HPCSA CEO and Registrar. "We therefore believe these Guideline Tariffs to be a fair interim measure that will guide practitioners on billing, protect patients, and enable the Council to adjudicate on complaints of overcharging."

The Guideline Tariffs are intended to:

- Assist practitioners in ensuring their patients/clients are fully informed upfront of the fees of the service to be rendered;
- Obtain informed consent from patients/clients allowing health professionals to levy an agreed upon fee which protects the practitioner and patient;
- Permit practitioners to set their fee schedules, provided informed consent has been obtained from patients/clients to charge the agreed upon fee;
- Ensure practitioners provide patients/clients with written evidence of their specific health professional fee to be charged as well as the HPCSA Guideline Tariff;
- Upon receipt of the quotation, obtain written informed consent from patients/clients by practitioners so that they are permitted to charge the agreed fee; and
- Require health professionals to keep a formal written record of the informed consent given by patients/clients in a format and language that is understandable to the patient/client.

In terms of Section 53(1) of the Act and rulings of the Council which suggest that where a patient is incapable of providing consent and there is an emergency to render a service, the practitioner may provide a service either by obtaining consent from the next-of-kin or without obtaining consent where it is impossible to obtain such consent.

"This pronouncement provides clear guidance to healthcare professionals on acceptable billing practices, while consumers of healthcare will be protected by knowing what they will be charged for healthcare services upfront."

Fees can be obtained from the [HPCSA website](#).

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