

1. Information re GP Visit Card - Children under six years.

All children under six years are now entitled to free GP care under this scheme announced by Government and effective from 1st July 2015. The scheme provides free visits to the GP and will include a “Wellness Check” at age two and five years focused on health and wellbeing and disease prevention of your child. In Asthma cases, it will include a “cycle of care for the proper management of the asthma”. It will also include urgent out of hours care and home visits if considered necessary by your GP of choice.

To register, log on to the HSE website and go to the section - **GP Visit Card Children under 6** and into the register online section. You will need to select the GP of your choice to treat your child and have the following information;

1. Your child’s PPS number 2. Your own PPS number 3. The GP’s name.

When the GP of your choice accepts your child as a patient, the **GP Visit Card** will issue from the HSE which you can then use up to your child’s sixth birthday.

2. Information re Over 70’s GP Visit Card.

With effect from 5th August 2015, every citizen aged 70 years or over is entitled to free GP care regardless of income and is not means tested. To register for the card, log on to **gpvisitcard.ie** and select your GP of choice and provide your PPS number and your spouses PPS number if he/she is over 70 years of age. Once your GP has accepted you as a patient, the GP Visit Card will issue to you. If you need assistance or to register by phone – you can ring 1890 252 919.

As children under six years of age and persons over 70 years of age are now entitled to free GP care under the above State schemes, the Society will discontinue paying GP visit benefit from 1st January 2016. This provides a six month window to complete the registration process and will generate a small saving in the Society’s payments under this heading.

3. Escalating Costs of Medical Care.

The Committee are very concerned at the escalating costs of medical care particularly in Public Hospitals since the commencement of the Health (Amendment) Act 2013. This Act introduced the concept of Multi Occupancy as against Semi Private Rooms in Public Hospitals which means that medical insurers are billed where their members occupy a bed in a Public Hospital. Our payments to Public Hospitals so far in 2015 as against 2014 are up by 29% or €2.2 million.

Of concern to the Committee is the fact that all members pay PRSI contributions which affords them the option of being treated as a public patient in the State’s hospitals, if that is their choice. There is evidence to suggest that members admitted via A&E are being coerced into signing Private Insurance Patient Forms and Garda Medical Aid Forms without explaining to them that they can choose to be treated as a public patient. You, by law must **waive** your entitlement to be treated as a public patient and opt to be treated privately by your Consultant before the hospital can levy charges on your insurer.

Of even greater concern is the fact that members are being asked to sign these forms at the time of discharge or after discharge by posting them to their home. This is not the correct procedure and you should not sign the forms in these situations.

The Committee are currently reviewing benefits and subscriptions which will be adjusted in January 2016 because of these ever escalating costs. Any increase applied will be the **minimum** necessary to sustain the Society on a sound financial footing and preserve benefits.

4. Check Contact Details, DOB etc.

Log in to www.medicalaid.ie and into the Claims Record section and check that the following information on our system is correct: (a) PPS Number (b) D.O.B. for you and each family member (c) Email address (c) Phone Number and (d) Registered Address. If your PPS number or any D.O.B. is incorrect, please email the correct details to customerservice@medicalaid.ie or ring us at (01) 8991604.

You can update your **Email Address, Phone Number and Registered Address** online by clicking into the “Update my Details” section of the website. Thank you for your assistance in ensuring we hold the correct and up to date information on our systems.

Owen Connell
SECRETARY.