



12/5/2021

Medicare rebate for ambulatory blood pressure monitoring

High Blood Pressure Research Council of Australia Media Release

\$40.5 million to combat the biggest killer world-wide - Medicare rebate for diagnosis of high blood pressure using ambulatory blood pressure monitoring.

The High Blood Pressure Research Council of Australia (HBPRCA) is delighted to see that the Morrison Government has allocated \$40.5 million in the 2021-2022 Federal Budget for ambulatory blood pressure monitoring - a service for diagnosing high blood pressure that is more accurate through blood pressure monitoring over 24 hours. We were extremely pleased that the Medical Services Advisory Committee has recommended Medicare reimbursement for ambulatory blood pressure monitoring and grateful to the Commonwealth Minister for Health, the Hon Greg Hunt MP, who has endorsed this application. This new Medicare Benefits Scheme (MBS) item is scheduled to commence on 1 November 2021.

With around 1/3 of the adult population suffering from elevated BP in Australia, the benefits of the reimbursement are profound as it makes the gold standard for diagnosis of high blood pressure affordable, thereby helping to markedly reduce the number of undiagnosed cases of high blood pressure and facilitate adequate management to prevent adverse health consequences such as stroke and heart attacks.

A significant number of Australians are living with undiagnosed, untreated or uncontrolled high blood pressure. High blood pressure is a major risk factor for strokes, heart attacks, heart failure and kidney failure. The gold standard for diagnosing high blood pressure is ambulatory blood pressure monitoring which involves wearing a portable monitor over 24 hours to gauge an accurate measure of a patient's blood pressure during normal daily activity. However, until now this test was not reimbursed under Medicare and as such was out of the reach of many Australians who may have high blood pressure.

In 2018, a select committee of the High Blood Pressure Research Council (HBPRCA) which included Professor Geoffrey Head (Chair), Dr Anastasia Mihailidou, Professor Michael Stowasser (President at the time) and Professor Markus Schlaich (Current President) set in motion an application to the government to have ambulatory blood pressure monitoring included as a Medicare item number for the diagnosis of high blood pressure. This application was also endorsed by the Heart Foundation, Royal Australian College of General Practitioners and Cardiac Society of Australia & New Zealand.

The Medical Services Advisory Committee immediately accepted the clinical effectiveness of ambulatory blood pressure monitoring and after investigation of the cost/benefit aspects concluded that this technique would save lives and reduce hospitalisation costs compared to current practice. The outcome highlights the importance of 'out of office' blood pressure measurement and considerable gaps in effectively diagnosing and treating high blood pressure. "Although the common assessment of hypertension has been via clinic measurements, this technique has limitations".

The HBPRCA ABPM committee acknowledges the support from AtCor Medical, A&D Medical, Hill-Rom, and Cardioscan which enabled us to engage Sue O'Malley from Medical Intelligence to prepare the documentation for MSAC.

For further information or to organise interviews please contact:

Geoffrey Head (Chair) M: 0417368914 Geoff.head@baker.edu.au

Anastasia Mihailidou M: 0418736036 anastasia.mihailidou@health.nsw.gov.au

Michael Stowasser O: 07 31762694 M: 0412190038 m.stowasser@uq.edu.au

Markus Schlaich O: 08 92240382 M: 0402831169 markus.schlaich@uwa.edu.au