

## **FEE BENCHMARKS FOR PRIVATE SECTOR CHARGES** ([www.moh.gov.sg/billsandfees](http://www.moh.gov.sg/billsandfees))

### **FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS**

**1. Who do the fee benchmarks apply to? Are they applicable for foreigners, patients with international insurance or patients who are willing to pay for non-standard procedures or hospital accommodation?**

The fee benchmarks were developed based on fees for transacted cases of Singapore Citizens for treatment provided in a private hospital or clinic<sup>1</sup>. Doctors should use the benchmarks as a reference when determining their professional fees and make reference to them when advising patients on their fees. Their professional fees should be based on patients' condition, complexity of the treatment and the effort and time required of them, rather than patients' financial ability, insurance coverage or nationality, unless there are valid reasons on why the fees should differ.

**2. My doctor's surgeon fees are above the fee benchmarks. What should I do?**

Charges that are higher than the benchmarks may not be unreasonable, particularly where a case is unusual in its context or complexity and require significantly more time or effort. You should find out more from your doctor regarding the complexity of your condition, the treatment options available, and his / her fees. If still in doubt, you can approach your referring doctor or your family doctor for advice.

**3. How do I tell if my doctor's explanation for charging above the benchmarks is reasonable?**

You may wish to consider if there are any extenuating circumstances regarding your condition that may warrant a higher fee compared to a typical patient, for example, if you have multiple conditions that may complicate the surgery or the treatment. If you are still in doubt after discussing with your doctor, you may wish to approach your referring doctor or family doctor for advice.

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<sup>1</sup> Surgeon fee benchmarks were derived from 2017 fee data of Singapore Citizens undergoing a single procedure in a private hospital or clinic.

Anaesthetist fee benchmarks were derived by determining the anaesthetist risk, effort, complexity and time, as well as patient variability affecting anaesthesia, with reference to 2018 fee data of Singapore Citizens undergoing a single procedure in a private hospital or clinic.

Inpatient attendance fee benchmarks took reference from the Singapore Medical Association (SMA) 2006 Guideline on Fees (GOF), inflation rates, samples of doctors' financial counselling forms, available 2019 data of hospital cases, as well as feedback from doctors during consultation sessions.

**4. Why are the anaesthetist fee benchmarks higher / lower than the historical range of anaesthetist fees published on the website?**

The historical range of anaesthetist fees shown on the website reflects the current model of charging whereby anaesthetist fees in the private sector are often a proportion of surgeon fees. The fee benchmarks, however, take into account the anaesthesia risks associated with the surgery and any added complexity arising from the patient's condition, independent of the complexity of the surgery or surgical fees. Hence, some procedures may see a decrease in fees compared to current fees while others may see an increase, arising from the newly introduced fee benchmarks.

**5. Where can I go to compare the fees of different doctors?**

The publication of fee benchmarks aims to encourage private sector healthcare providers in charging appropriately and enable patients and payers to make more informed decisions.

Charges of doctors would vary given that each patient's case varies in complexity. Hence, the recommended benchmarks for surgeon and anaesthetist fees, and doctors' inpatient attendance fees are a range of fees instead of a single figure.

While benchmarks would aid patients in making more informed decision on their choice of doctors, it is useful to note that fees alone are not a measure of quality. High fees do not necessarily mean better care. On the other hand, high fees also do not imply overcharging as there may be a wide range of complexity for the same procedure.

MOH does not publish the fee ranges for individual medical practitioners. Nonetheless, you may approach your referring doctor or family doctor for advice.

**6. There are no fee benchmarks for my surgery. What should I refer to?**

You may wish to check with your doctor how your surgery compares with another procedure that has fee benchmarks to assess the reasonableness of the fees you are quoted.

For hospital admissions that do not require surgery, you may wish to check the fee benchmarks for doctors' inpatient attendances for reference. Information on fee benchmarks and bill sizes for common conditions can be found on the MOH website ([www.moh.gov.sg/billsandfees](http://www.moh.gov.sg/billsandfees)).

**7. Why are there only fee benchmarks for lower intensity ICU cases? What about the medium to high intensity ICU cases?**

The model of care for medium to high intensity ICU cases in the private sector could vary significantly. Hence, the Fee Benchmarks Advisory Committee will be studying how to set a meaningful fee range that can encompass the range of effort or work done. Nonetheless, you may still use the recommended fee ranges for lower intensity ICU cases as a baseline reference.

**8. Why are there no fee benchmarks for public hospitals? Why is there no breakdown of operation fees by its components for public hospitals, while there is a breakdown of Total Operation Fees into its components for private hospitals?**

The public sector fee structure is very different from that in the private sector. Public sector doctors are compensated differently - they are salaried and do not charge a separate fee for performing an operation or consultation. Hence, there is no equivalent 'surgeon fee', 'anaesthetist fee', or 'doctors' inpatient attendance fee' components in the public hospitals.

For the public sector, the total hospital bill size information for common procedures are more relevant and they are available on the MOH website ([www.moh.gov.sg/billsandfees](http://www.moh.gov.sg/billsandfees)). Hence, any comparison between public and private hospital fees should be done using the total hospital bill size information.