



College of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia

Professional Guideline

Annual Fees to Patients

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Related topic(s):	Access to Medical Care , Conflict of Interest , Sale and Dispensing of Drugs by Physicians

A **professional guideline** reflects a recommended course of action established based on the values, principles and duties of the medical profession. Physicians may exercise reasonable discretion in their decision-making based on the guidance provided.

Registrants may seek advice on these issues by contacting the College and asking to speak with a member of the registrar staff, or by seeking medical legal advice from the CMPA.

PREAMBLE

This document is a guideline of the Board of the College of Physicians and Surgeons of British Columbia.

COLLEGE'S POSITION

Most of patients' medical fees are covered by the Medical Services Plan of BC (MSPBC). However, there are some services that are not covered. Patients may be charged for these services one by one, or charged an annual fee which would cover all the services which are not paid by the Medical Services Plan. The College has set out rules which physicians must follow if they wish to charge annual fees:

1. Physicians may not charge a patient an annual fee for a period of less than a year;
2. The bill for the annual fee must list in writing each of the services that is covered by the fee. The patient has the right to ask the physician about any charge he/she does not understand;
3. The patient must be told how much each service would cost if paid for by itself;
4. The patient does not have to pay an annual fee. Patients are allowed to pay for each service which is not covered by the Medical Services Plan one by one;
5. The patient may decide whether or not to pay for services not covered by MSPBC as an annual fee. The physician may not refuse to see the patient or refuse to include the patient in his/her practice if he/she does not wish to pay this way;
6. Before a patient is charged an annual fee, the physician must:
 - a. give the patient a copy of these rules, and
 - b. ask the patient if he/she agrees to pay an annual fee;
7. The physician may not charge the patient a fee for "being available" in advance (for example, being available to take calls from patients).

For more information about MSPBC, go to: <http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/msp/>