

Information sheet

13 May 2019

Cosmetic medical and surgical procedures – guidance on financing schemes

Background

In 2016, the Medical Board of Australia (the Board) issued [Guidelines for registered medical practitioners who perform cosmetic medical and surgical procedures](#). The Guidelines aim to improve safeguards for consumers who seek cosmetic medical and surgical procedures.

Definition

Cosmetic medical and surgical procedures are surgical operations and other procedures that revise or change the appearance, colour, texture, structure or position of normal bodily features, with the sole intention of achieving what the patient perceives to be a more desirable appearance or boosting the patient's self-esteem.

Section 12 Financial arrangements

Section 12 of the Guidelines provides advice about medical practitioners' financial arrangements.

12.4 The medical practitioner should not offer financing schemes to patients (other than credit card facilities), either directly or through a third party, such as loans or commercial payment plans, as part of the cosmetic medical or surgical services.

Guidance

The Board is providing additional guidance about cosmetic financing schemes for medical practitioners who provide cosmetic medical and surgical procedures.

The Board is not changing the existing Guidelines. It is providing additional information to clarify its position.

The Board does not wish to restrict patient access to finance or restrict medical practitioners from providing information to their patients about payment options.

Providing information about finance and payment options/methods

Under the Guidelines, medical practitioners can provide information on their website about funding options and accepted payment methods. The Board does not consider this to be 'offering a finance scheme'.

As a guide, information that **can** be provided includes:

- a list of accepted payment methods (should list multiple methods, not just one), for example, cash, credit cards (e.g. Visa, Mastercard), buy now, pay later products (e.g. Zip Pay, Afterpay, Openpay), medical loans (e.g. MacCredit)
- a list of company names for which the practitioner is an approved merchant, for example, Openpay, Afterpay, Zip Pay, Zip Money and other similar products
- a list of ways that patients may wish to source funds, e.g. personal loan, payment plan
- information about how patients can find finance providers e.g. 'Google medical loans'.

The following **should not** be included:

- hyperlinks or website addresses of finance providers
- recommending one or more finance providers or payment methods (beyond listing payment methods and company names)
- features or benefits of a particular payment method, e.g. 'simple application, flexible terms'
- credit approval times, e.g. '3-minute approval'
- any 'Apply now' option or button.

Offering payment options

Medical practitioners can *offer* a patient the option to pay for their procedure in instalment payments made directly to the practitioner. This is not considered to be a financing scheme or commercial payment plan, if there is no third party involved and there is no formal, commercial element to the arrangement.

What does 'offering finance schemes' mean?

The Guidelines state that 'A medical practitioner should not offer financing schemes to patients... either directly or through a third party...'

A medical practitioner is considered to be offering a financing scheme if they:

- promote or recommend one or more finance providers or products (beyond listing payment methods and company names)
- outline the features and/or benefits of a provider or product
- include a link to a provider's website or include a provider's website address, with or without a link
- facilitate access to a third-party provider or product, such as an 'Apply now' option or button
- encourage a patient to access finance to have their procedure sooner, e.g. 'Have your surgery now without having to worry about paying upfront'
- suggest a patient can contact the medical practitioner/clinic for information about a finance provider, e.g. 'Call us to ask about '____' finance'.