



AOA responds to 4 Corners Report

As the leading authority in the provision of orthopaedic information to the Australian community, the Australian Orthopaedic Association (AOA) is committed to ensuring the highest possible standard of orthopaedic care and ethical behaviour of its members.

Importantly, AOA does not condone extortionate or manifestly excessive fees which bear little relationship if any to utilisation of skills, time or resources and such behaviour is a breach of the AOA Code of Conduct and is dealt with by AOA.

Currently, Medicare rebates do not cover the full cost of providing patients with medical care. This is because the rate at which successive governments have indexed the Medicare Schedule fees has been substantially lower than increases in the Consumer Price Index (CPI) and average weekly earnings.

The reality is that Medicare rebates do not cover the cost of providing patients with a safe and high quality service. The fees charged by Australian orthopaedic surgeons have to cover practice costs including employing receptionists and practice nurses, and meeting our operating expenses such as rent, medical equipment, electricity, computers and insurance. Importantly, it is the responsibility of all AOA members to ensure the patient knows in advance what their fees will be, through an informed surgical consent.

We have been working hard to ensure out-of-pockets costs to patients are minimised.

The AOA National Joint Replacement Registry (AOANJRR) has led in the study of prosthesis performance since 1999. The saving of revision arthroplasty burden due to AOANJRR data has saved the national health budget \$600 million since 2002, while clinical leaders continue to rely heavily on AOANJRR data and advice.

In collaboration with RACS, AOA has worked on an audit program that reviews variation in length of stay (difference between private and public hospitals), antibiotic use and complications to better understand and minimise out-of-pocket expenses.

Orthopaedic surgeons have been active in working on Enhanced Recovery after Surgery programs to reduce length of stay. One such program in Northern Sydney Local Health district has seen a fall of 1.2 bed days in 12 months.



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The AOA continues to actively engage with the federal government on the MBS review.

It is recognised that the overwhelming majority of Australia's orthopaedic surgeons are responsible, ethical and always act in the best interest of patients charging fees that reflect the skill, time and resources required for orthopaedic procedures.

AOA believes in openness and transparency and its Code of Conduct includes provision for seeking second opinion on orthopaedic advice and, in a similar spirit, patients are entitled to understand the basis of fees charged and seek alternate service provision to assist them make the most appropriate decision.