



Health Bulletin 18 November 2021

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- [New Medicare rebates and PBS listings](#)
- *Lanzer v Australian Broadcasting Corporation* [2021] FCA 1283
- Cutting cataract surgery wait times would prevent thousands of falls while also saving money, research finds
- Self-testing for HIV

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[New Medicare rebates and PBS listings](#)

IVF testing to prevent Australians passing on a serious genetic disorder to their children will soon be claimable under the Medicare rebate as part of a \$95.9 million dollar federal government initiative.

From 1 November 2021, Australians will be able to claim up to five items covering new pre-implantation genetic testing services provided within the existing IVF process. The types of genetic disorders that can be tested include Huntington's disease, neurofibromatosis, fragile X, spinal muscular atrophy, muscular dystrophy and cystic fibrosis.

According to Health Minister Greg Hunt, "This change will give real, practical support to individuals and couples on their fertility journey".

The Medicare rebate will also cover patients with chronic bowel inflammation to access non-invasive laboratory tests from 1 November, so long as the patient presents to a medical practitioner with symptoms suggestive of inflammatory or functional bowel disease for more than 6 weeks and is under 50 years old.

The Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme (PBS) is similarly being expanded. Mr Hunt has announced that from 1 November 2021, Australians with a respiratory illness, early onset puberty and blood cancer will have improved access to subsidised medicines through new and amended listings on the PBS.

From 1 November 2021:

- Breztri Aerosphere® (budesonide + glycopyrronium + formoterol)

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will be available on the PBS to treat chronic obstructive pulmonary disease (COPD); a preventable and treatable lung disease, which causes the airways in the lungs to narrow, making it difficult to breathe;

- Diphereline® (triptorelin) will be expanded to include the treatment of central precocious puberty (CCP);
- patients will have access to a new subcutaneous form of Darzalex®, which means it can be given as an injection under the skin. Darzalex® (daratumumab) was listed on the PBS for the first time earlier this year for use in combination with bortezomib and dexamethasone, as a second-line treatment for Australians with multiple myeloma; and
- Verzenio® (abemaciclib) will be expanded for use in combination with fulvestrant through the PBS delivering a new treatment option for Australians battling advanced forms of breast cancer.

Mr Hunt said "Since 2013, the Coalition Government had approved more than 2,700 new or amended listings on the PBS. This represents an average of around 30 listings or amendments per month – or one each day – at an overall investment by the Government of \$13.9 billion."

You can read the government's media releases [here](#) and [here](#).

[Lanzer v Australian Broadcasting Corporation \[2021\] FCA 1283](#)

Dr Daniel Lanzer (**Dr Lanzer**) recently had his application for an interlocutory injunction against the Australian Broadcasting Corporation (ABC) dismissed in the Federal Court of Australia.

Dr Lanzer sought to restrain the ABC from broadcasting an episode of its Four Corners television program on the basis it was publishing information received by former employees of Dr Lanzer which is confidential and may impair the reputation of Dr Lanzer in the eyes of the public and Dr Lanzer's customers.

The court held it was not satisfied Dr Lanzer had established a prima facie case against the ABC based on section 79 of the *Corporations Act 2001* (Cth). The court found Dr Lanzer's evidence of the former employees improperly using information obtained whilst employed to be weak. The court also found evidence of the former employees being motivated by a prohibited purpose to be weak, citing the motivation as a desire to expose unsafe and inappropriate practices and behaviour.

Above all, the court failed to establish the ABC induced or procured the former employees to breach their employment contracts with Dr Lanzer. The application for relief sought against the ABC failed and the television program aired on 25 October 2021.

Dr Lanzer has since given a legally enforceable undertaking to stop practicing medicine in Australia.

You can read the judgement [here](#).

[Cutting cataract surgery wait times would prevent thousands of falls while also saving money, research finds](#)

New research, published in *Public Health Research & Practice*, a journal of the Sax Institute, has found that Australians are waiting up to two and a half years for cataract surgery, and that cutting this wait time to just three months would significantly reduce the amount of avoidable falls and save the public money.

Specifically, the research found that if surgery wait times were capped at three months over a three year period, it could prevent 50,679 falls, an overall saving of \$6.6 million.

While wait times vary greatly across Australia, official statistics fail to capture the time it takes after diagnosis to be put on the official public hospital elective surgery waitlist. It has been calculated that generally, the best-case scenario is a wait time of four months and worst-case scenario is 30 months. These estimates do not take into account extra wait times created by COVID-19 elective surgery pauses.

Based on the 2016 National Eye Health Survey, nearly a quarter of a million people are living with visually significant cataracts, which is the leading cause of vision loss, affecting 20% of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people aged 40 and above, and 14% of non-indigenous people aged 50 and above.

The researchers call for greater investment in public cataract services, including the establishment of high-volume surgery services to increase capacity, standardising referral and triage processes, fast-tracking of referrals and prioritising surgery for Indigenous patients.

You can read the media release from *Public Health Research & Practice* [here](#).

[Self-testing for HIV](#)

There is one self-testing product available for use in Australia, called Atomo HIV Self-Test (**Atomo test**). On 22 October 2021, the conditions placed on the Australian Therapeutic Goods Administration (TGA) Register for HIV self-tests were amended, to improve accessibility to HIV testing.

The TGA states that the reasons for this were following further studies which demonstrated the improved usability of this test. Atomo can now more readily sell its test through third parties, online or through over-the-counter sales. The conditions eased also relate to advertising restrictions, such that Atomo may now make additional representations in its marketing material. Other suppliers or sponsors of HIV self-tests can make use of the eased conditions.

A key element of the easing of conditions is that organisations which supply HIV self-tests must provide users with information to ensure that the test is performed properly and the results interpreted correctly. This is assisted by the requirement that test developers must have sufficient telephone support for consumers.

For more information, visit the TGA [website](#).

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15 Feb 2024

Much has been made in recent years of the pervasive nature of bullying, discrimination and sexual harassment (BDSH) in the medical profession, and in particular in medical training.

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1 Feb 2024

A recent article in the International Journal for Quality in Healthcare (2024,36(1)), by Michael and David Greenfield (School of Population Health, UniNSW), highlights the challenges for improving the ...

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