

Dr Ben Stephens

Gynaecology, Obstetrics & Fertility

What is the Pregnancy Planning and Management Fee?

The planning and management fee facilitates personalised pregnancy care and allows women a choice when it comes to the quality management of specialist services throughout their pregnancy and private delivery. Management of pregnancy and delivery includes access to midwives in specialist rooms as well as an on-call obstetrician for the unpredictable timing as well as scheduled safe delivery of babies.

This pregnancy management fee is to be charged only once during a pregnancy and only when the pregnancy has reached 28 weeks' gestation.

The Medicare "Planning and Management of a Pregnancy" fee (MBS 16590) was first introduced when the Government realised many obstetricians did not make enough income from antenatal visits and delivery to cover the high overheads of running an obstetric medical practice - namely due to the professional indemnity insurance.

Obstetricians are required to hold patient obstetric records for 25 years.

A couple of historical events led to Medicare creating a Planning and Management Fee for Obstetricians. The major events were:

1. The demise of HIH Insurance in September 2001, *Australia's second biggest insurance company and the re-insurer for United Medical Protection (UMP)*, meant that HIH insurance became non-viable and appointed a provisional liquidator in 2002. This left up to 60% of doctors without professional indemnity insurance.
2. By April 2012, the rise of medical indemnity insurance premiums - *due to a largely unregulated legal system resulted in increasing incidents of litigation and large payouts* - led to spiralling obstetric practice costs and sadly many obstetricians ceased to practice as a result.

While the crisis that resulted in the introduction of the management fee has passed, the management fee remains an essential fee to maintain the viability of a private obstetric practice and the provision of quality obstetric care.

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