

Gender Bias in Contraceptive Procedures in Primary Care

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Purpose

The purpose of this paper is to brief the Minister on gender bias in contraception and recommend increasing the MBS rebate for IUD insertion.

Summary

	IUD	Vasectomy
Service	Female contraceptive procedure.	Male contraceptive procedure.
Time required	Minimum 30 minutes and most GPs allow 45 minutes to allow for recovery.	15 minutes (no snip technique).
Staff involved	GP or specialist gynaecologist + procedural assistant/nurse.	GP or specialist urologist + procedural assistant/nurse.
Training required	Additional IUD training required.	Additional vasectomy training required.
Medicare rebate to provider	\$72.05	\$200
Out-of-pocket cost per procedure	\$135 - \$190+ (estimate can vary by GP practice)	\$550 (per https://vasectomyaustralia.com.au/vasectomy-fees/)
Out-of-pocket cost per device	\$40 for a Mirena on PBS	
Out-of-pocket cost over lifetime	\$1750-2,300 (estimated 10 IUD insertions over a reproductive lifetime)	\$550

Background

Intra Uterine Device (IUD):

- The IUD is a female contraceptive procedure offering 99% efficacy against pregnancy for five years, requiring replacement afterward.
- Time Required: The procedure takes a minimum of 30 minutes, with an additional recovery period. Most GPs allocate 45 minutes for the process.
- Staff Involved: The IUD procedure typically involves a GP, or specialist gynaecologist, along with a procedural assistant or nurse.
- Medicare Rebate: Shockingly, the Medicare rebate for an IUD procedure is only \$72.05, leaving women to bear a disproportionate financial burden.

Vasectomy:

- Vasectomy is a male contraceptive procedure involving the surgical blocking or cutting of the vas deferens to prevent sperm from reaching semen.
- Time Required: The procedure typically takes approximately 15 minutes, with some providers utilising a "no snip" technique.
- Staff Involved: Vasectomy procedures are generally performed by a GP or specialist urologist, along with a procedural assistant or nurse.
- Medicare Rebate: The Medicare rebate for a vasectomy is significantly higher at \$200, exacerbating the gender disparity in contraceptive choices.

Issues:

- Higher out-of-pocket for vasectomy per procedure, although women and other people who need contraception, have to go through IUD replacements every five years
- Vasectomy is an excellent option for contraception and should be accessible to all people with testes who need it. The work of vasectomy clinicians work is highly valued and we do not take issue with the current rebate for vasectomy.
- But the current rebates are unfair, so the doctors doing this work (many who are female 'women's health' doctors) are having to limit the number or procedures they do.
- The brunt of contraception should not fall squarely on women and other people who need female contraception.
- We are calling for more equal Medicare rebates, following on from recent national efforts from clinicians around Australia.

Recommendation

1. That Australian Government increase the MBS rebate for IUD insertion.