

Supporting
Australians
for 15 years

Breast
Cancer
Network
Australia



13 July 2016

The Protocol Advisory Sub-Committee
The Health Technology Assessment (HTA) Team
Medical Services Advisory Committee
Australian Government Department of Health
MDP 959
GPO Box 9848
CANBERRA ACT 2601

RE: Proposed Protocols for Public Comment
1434: Pathology – Anti-Mullerian monitoring
1435: Processing of gonadal tissue and gametes

Breast Cancer Network Australia (BCNA) writes in support of the abovementioned Protocols being considered by the Protocol Advisory Sub-Committee (PASC).

Breast Cancer Network Australia is the peak national consumer organisation for Australians personally affected by breast cancer. We support, inform, represent and connect people whose lives have been affected by breast cancer. BCNA represents more than 115,000 individual members and 300 Member Groups across Australia.

Each year in Australia, around 800 women under the age of 40 are diagnosed with breast cancer. A number of these women may hope to start or grow their family after treatment. Breast cancer treatments such as chemotherapy and hormone therapy can affect a woman's fertility, both in the short term and permanently if treatment results in permanent early menopause. There can be feelings of grief and loss for women unable to have children as a result of their breast cancer treatment. Access to affordable fertility preservation tests and treatments gives younger women more choice and control over their fertility options.

There have been certain things that have related to me as a young woman that a woman at a later stage of her life wouldn't necessarily be concerned with. I wanted to have another baby. Could this still happen? - Lee, diagnosed with breast cancer at age 39

Ovarian reserve tests (anti-Mullerian monitoring) and cryopreservation are important fertility options for women undergoing breast cancer treatment. Without a Medicare rebate, most women are left with a considerable out-of-pocket cost for these tests and procedures. Cryopreservation can cost up to \$12,000 per visit. Anti-Mullerian monitoring may cost around \$95 each time a woman is tested.

Younger women often have fewer financial resources to draw upon. They typically have less savings, less superannuation, and often greater ongoing financial commitments, including higher education loans, mortgage repayments and/or rental costs. There can be substantial out-of-pocket costs associated with breast cancer treatment and care. Breast cancer treatment may also impact a woman's ability to remain in the paid workforce, resulting in reduced income.

Introducing a Medicare rebate for anti-Mullerian monitoring and processing of gonadal tissue and gametes would assist in reducing the substantial cost burden on young women with breast cancer who are considering their fertility choices.

The proposed rebates help to address the inequity facing young women with breast cancer and help to ensure that young women do not miss out on the option to start or grow a family because of prohibitive costs.

I chose to freeze some ovarian tissue. As a woman in my thirties, I didn't want that option taken away from me because of chemotherapy. I have peace of mind knowing that I did everything possible to try to preserve my fertility. - Diane

For further information, please contact Pauline McLoughlin, Senior Policy Officer, on 03 9805 2503 or pmcloughlin@bcna.org.au

Yours sincerely



Kathy Wells
Head of Policy, Research and Advocacy