

Statement

November 2015

National drug screening protocol

Background

There are health practitioners with a history of substance misuse who have restrictions placed on their registration. These restrictions are generally designed to keep the public safe while the practitioner remains in practice.

When restrictions are placed on a health practitioner's registration, AHPRA monitors the practitioner to make sure they are complying with the restrictions. This process is referred to as 'monitoring and compliance'.

From November 2015, all health practitioners who have restrictions placed on their registration by the Board as a result of past substance misuse will have routine quarterly hair testing, in addition to random urine testing. Routine hair testing provides additional information about the use of a wide range of drugs, over a longer time period. It therefore provides greater assurance to the Board that the practitioner is not impaired as a result of ongoing substance misuse.

The introduction of routine hair testing is based on expert advice about modern drug screening methods. Using contemporary scientific evidence and the advice of an expert panel, National Boards and AHPRA will manage the risk associated with practitioners with a history of substance misuse.

Funding

As required by the National Law¹, National Boards will pay the costs of testing required to assess a practitioner, where that testing is required as part of a health assessment required by the Board.

Health practitioners will pay for ongoing screening costs, including the cost of hair testing which is currently \$825 including GST per test.

This funding model, which requires health practitioners to pay for the cost of ongoing screening, recognises that health practitioners who have restrictions on their registration linked to past substance misuse are able to continue to work while being monitored and therefore can earn an income.

Boards have approved a policy whereby in instances of proven financial hardship, they may bear the cost of ongoing screening.

More information

More about the assessment and management of practitioners whose health impairment may pose a risk to the health and safety of the public is published online:

- media release about the [strengthening of national drug screening](#) 16 February 2015
- information about the [notifications process](#)
- [fact sheet about monitoring and compliance](#)

¹ The Health Practitioner Regulation National Law, as in force in each state and territory

- fact sheet about [health assessments](#).