

## Informed Financial Consent

The Pathology Profession and the Australian Association of Pathology Practices (AAPP) recognise the need for the Australian community to be well informed about out of pocket expenses that may be incurred by patients undergoing pathology testing when hospitalised or undertaking elective surgery. To provide this information to patients, doctors and hospitals the Pathology Profession has had to overcome several important obstacles:

- Pathologists, although specialist medical practitioners, rarely have direct contact with their patients;
- Pathologists respond to a request to provide a service/test from another medical specialist or medical practitioner, but they do not initiate testing;
- Under Federal Legislation, accounts for services cannot be issued until after Pathology testing is completed; and
- The process of Pathology testing is particularly complex (see the AAPP paper on the "Request-Test-Report Cycle" at [www.aapp.asn.au](http://www.aapp.asn.au)).

AAPP members have made a firm commitment to support Informed Financial Consent (IFC) for our patients, agreeing to provide as a minimum to patients, doctors and hospitals a personalised brochure which contains open and honest information relating to billing practices. This brochure should be made available to the patient by the referring doctor/specialist at the time of consultation, by the Pathologist's Approved Collection Centre at the time of specimen collection, and/or by the hospital in its pre-admission package.

A contact person /email address should be evident on the brochure to ensure questions about billing, from the doctor, hospital and/or patient, can be addressed in a timely and informed manner. The brochure should also identify a practice website address, if available, which could assist the process of IFC by providing further information and appropriate links to contact people.

AAPP members continue to refine the information and communications systems we have put in place to assist our patients, referring doctors and hospitals with IFC.