



## GPI POLICY - HEALTH

### Reference:

LAWS OF PITCAIRN, HENDERSON, DUCIE AND OENO ISLANDS

*Revised Edition 2001*

CHAPTER XXIV

Dental & Medical Practitioners Ordinance. CAP 24, 393

GPI Health & Safety Policy

Part II and III of the Social Welfare Benefits Ordinance

### Rationale:

Pitcairn Island is an isolated community. Transport on and off island is difficult, so it is essential to provide services that enable the majority of health management to be undertaken on island. GPI will provide a high standard of health care to the Pitcairn community in the areas of health management, health promotion and preventative health care.

Secondary care options include New Zealand and Tahiti. Tahiti due to its closeness to Pitcairn is the preferred primary location for all secondary appointments as it is a lesser burden financially on HMG and reduces the duration the patient is off island.

### Definitions:

Primary health care covers a broad range of out-of-hospital services. It aims to improve the community health by working with them through health improvement and preventative services such as health education and counselling, disease prevention and screening. Primary health care includes services such as general practice, nursing, pharmacy, family planning, mental health and wellbeing, dentistry, optometry and audiology.

Secondary health care is treatment requiring hospitalisation. Pitcairn Island does not have these facilities, so patients requiring secondary care will be sent to Tahiti as a first priority, or to New Zealand if necessary.

Chronic illness refers to a persistent and recurring illness lasting three months or more and incurring significant disturbance and impairment to physical, psychological or social wellbeing.

Medivac refers to emergency evacuation of sick or wounded patients and is distinct from medical referral which is referral off island for non-emergency specialist care or investigation.

Category A: refers to patients needing referral to medical treatment. The patient will pay 1/3 of the total medical and travel costs.

Category B: refers to medical treatment only and does not cover travel. This category is used when a person is going overseas for personal reasons and seeks approved medical, dental, optometry or audiology services while overseas. The patient will pay 1/3 of the total medical treatment.

### Policy Objectives:

Date Policy last reviewed: 11<sup>th</sup> November 2021  
Date Policy due for next review: November 2023



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To provide comprehensive primary health services to the Pitcairn Islands' permanent residents, and HMG Contracted staff and to coordinate with medical services abroad when necessary for secondary care.

Activities:

No subsidy shall be granted to any person under the provisions of this policy unless such person is ordinarily resident on Pitcairn Island.

1. GPI provides primary health services to all Pitcairn Islands' residents from neo-natal to geriatric care.
  - The Pitcairn Health Centre currently provides general practice, nursing, x-ray, dental, pharmacy, urgent and emergency care services.
  - The general practitioner is known as the Medical Officer.
  - All medical practitioners submit their qualifications to the Pitcairn Islands Office and the Community Development Division Manager as per the Dental and Medical Practitioners' Ordinance.
  - A copy of medical practitioners' registrations/qualifications is publicly displayed in the Pitcairn Health Centre.
  - Medical Officers will supply patients with a copy of their on-island medical records on request.
  - All patients treated at the Pitcairn Health Centre pay for services as per the designated clinic charges (Annex A.) Visiting Pitcairn relatives and immigrants will pay full fees the first six months. Long term temporary residents, will always pay full fees.
  - Persons suffering from chronic illnesses will pay 1/3 of their medication cost. There is a different charge for pensioners and children.
2. GPI/PIO coordinates with Healix and provides Medivac services as deemed necessary by the Medical Officer. (See Annex C – Medivac Procedure Doc)
  - The Medical Officer undertakes medical assessment of all patients on an individual basis to ascertain whether evacuation for treatment is necessary or if the patient can be safely treated on island.
  - Only permanent residents, and if necessary, immigrants who are deemed to be so under the Pitcairn Islands Immigration Ordinance, shall be eligible to make an application for treatment overseas under this Policy.

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- Visitors will also be assessed for referral and medical evacuation, but will need to pay 100% of associated costs.
  - A Medical Certificate/Certificate of Recommendation must be signed by the Pitcairn Island Medical Officer and accompany each application. (See Annex D)
  - The patient must report to the Hospital/ Consulting Physician to attend their scheduled appointment and shall faithfully follow any instructions concerning prescribed medical treatment as agreed by Pitcairn MO.
  - All permanent residents of the Pitcairn Islands, if overseas for any reason, are strongly encouraged to have a dental and optical examination if it has been a year or more since their last examination. If the patient agrees then the Pitcairn MO will make the appropriate referrals to Helix. The Pitcairn doctor will ascertain if any other medical tests or investigations are required and refer specifically for these as appropriate. The costs of the examination and any resulting tests or treatment will be paid for by GPI as stated in Activity 9.
3. The Medical Officer ensures that test results are followed up and recorded in individual patient files at the Pitcairn Health Centre.
    - Healix ensures that the medical practitioners, seen by the patient while overseas, send copies of all medical records to the Medical Officer at the Pitcairn Health Centre.
  4. GPI provides appropriate testing facilities for analysis of biopsies and medical samples shipped from Pitcairn Island.
    - The Pitcairn doctor or nurse coordinates with PIO to provide this service, at the closest or most convenient facility, to achieve the most accurate results and fastest response possible.
  5. GPI provides primary care practitioners on Island.
    - The Medical Officer tracks all medical care of all permanent residents of the Pitcairn Islands and refers patients to appropriate centres when overseas treatment is required. Referrals overseas must be signed off by GPI as per Annex C.
  6. The Pitcairn Health Centre Staff provide health education and preventative health advice to the Pitcairn Island community as and when appropriate.

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- GPI requires that the medical staff of Pitcairn Health Centre provide health education and/or preventative health advice on an ongoing and regular basis to the Pitcairn Island Community. The education provided will be approved and funded by GPI based upon recommendations from the Medical Officer and the Community Care Officer. The Medical Office and staff at the Pitcairn Health Centre provide annual First Aid training to ensure that all local First Aid certificates are current.
7. The Pitcairn Health Centre staff will ensure that all consultations are private and patient confidentiality is kept at all times.
- All staff employed by the Pitcairn Health Centre agrees to abide by the GPI confidentiality agreement in their GPI Employment Contract thus protecting the privacy rights of patients in their care.
8. The Medical Officer will provide medical certificates and assessment in the case of illness, accidents or injury in the work place. Treatment of injury or illness of GPI employees is covered under the conditions in the Health & Safety Policy.
9. The Medical Officer along with the Nurse are responsible for completing the Annex C form and acquire the patient's signature. Pitcairn Island permanent residents requiring medical treatment overseas, as deemed necessary by the Medical Officer, are entitled to the following benefits:
- 1) For any person/s sole income from government sources is derived by virtue of Part II and III of the Social Welfare Benefits Ordinance i.e., senior citizens and children under the age of 16 years GPI will cover:
    - The whole cost of return travel between Pitcairn Island and the appropriate designated destination as determined by GPI.
    - Full medical costs for investigation and treatment while overseas, provided all these consultations and investigations are approved in advance by the Pitcairn Island doctor.
    - Accommodation and a daily allowance for living expenses while overseas.

Travel bookings confirmed by PIO are to remain in place with no variation unless specifically agreed by the Pitcairn Island doctor who may seek clarification of decision making from PIO Any other costs will be met by the individual.

- The whole cost of hospitalisation, consultation and operation fees.
- The whole cost of post-operative care approved by the Pitcairn doctor, in consultation with the Consulting Specialist.

2) For permanent resident/s not included in the above GPI will cover:

Two thirds of the return travel between Pitcairn Island and the appropriate designated destination as determined by the Medical Officer and Healix.

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- Travel bookings confirmed by PIO are to remain in place with no variation unless specifically agreed by the Pitcairn doctor. Any other costs will be met by the individual.
  - Two thirds of the cost of the hospitalisation, consultation and operation fees.
  - Two thirds of the cost of post-operative care approved by the Consulting Physician.
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  - The applicant will receive funding as stated above, provided he/she returns to Pitcairn Island on the first available opportunity, unless he/she is still receiving medical treatment (or at such time as approved by Pitcairn doctor). This decision would be made in conjunction with the treating physician's report and recommendations in New Zealand or Tahiti.
  - Failure to comply with the above will render the applicant liable for the full passage and medical costs.
  - GPI requires repayment of the relevant fees from the patient within a time frame as agreed with the applicant and/or their family on a case-by-case basis, once the relevant amount of expenses accrued has been determined, and once the applicant is declared fit by the Consulting Physician.
- 10.** A Pitcairn Island Permanent Resident seeking overseas medical treatment will have the opportunity to be accompanied if deemed necessary.
- The Pitcairn MO may approve the payment of a passage grant in respect of a caregiver, for two thirds of the return fare between Pitcairn Island and the designated destination. If in the opinion of the Medical Officer, such a caregiver is required because the applicant is incapacitated this will be approved.
  - The Pitcairn MO, in consultation as considered appropriate may, in addition to the above award, recommend the payment of a passage grant in respect of the applicant's dependent child/children, equal to the full amount of the return fare between Pitcairn Island and the designated destination
  - Any person receiving a passage grant, as stated above, shall be subject to the same provisions as to the return to Pitcairn Island as for the applicant him/herself.
  - GPI requires repayment of the relevant fees for the accompanying person within the same time frame as the patient's fees. These expenses will be combined with the Patient's expenses and repayment terms will be as noted above.
- 11.** The applicant may be entitled to a Cost-of-Living Allowance, if necessary, whilst seeking medical treatment overseas.

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- A non-recoverable Cost of Living Allowance is available to those in need of medical treatment overseas, from the day of arrival at an approved designated destination. This is available provided the patient returns to Pitcairn Island at the first available opportunity, after clearance by the consulting physician.
- Beneficiaries under parts II, III, and IV of the Social Welfare Ordinance will receive, in addition to their pension or benefit, the Cost-of-Living Allowance.
- The Cost-of-Living Allowance will be withdrawn if the applicant or their caregiver is employed for financial gain or is in receipt of a benefit from any other source that is more than the Cost-of-Living Allowance or, leaves an approved designated destination without the approval of GPI.
- The patient chooses if they wish to stay with family members or separate accommodation. The daily Cost of Living allowance is available to both the applicant and accompanying caregiver. If the patient chooses to stay with family members/friends, half of the allowance will be directly credited to the accommodating family by PIO.
- The daily Cost of Living Allowance is set at \$80.00 per day per person only when the patient is required in New Zealand for further secondary medical treatment. The Cost-of-Living Allowance will only be paid up until the patient has medical clearance by the Doctor or Specialist and the patient leaves on the first available ship. If the patient, once medically cleared, decides to extend their stay the Cost-of-Living Allowance will be stopped at the time the next ship would have left.
- In all cases every effort will be made to minimise the time referred patients spend off island. Should a patient wish to remain overseas after having received the "all clear" to travel by the Doctor/s treating them, all associated costs will have to be done by the patient.

### 12. Medications

- If a resident or non-resident places an order for a specific item/medication and it arrives on the supply ship the person/s is obligated to take the order and if not, they will be billed for the item and the Clinic will not be burdened with an item that can't be prescribed to anyone else.
- Patients are charged a proportion of the cost of their medications, depending on their status e.g., fully employed, child, pensioner, visitor, non-resident, etc. A schedule of these charges is available in the clinic.

### 13. A Pitcairn Island Permanent Resident seeking overseas medical treatment has the opportunity to apply for further financial assistance.

- In addition, GPI may approve an interest free loan to the applicant for the purpose of meeting their share of transport costs or living costs, or other reasonable expenses of the applicant (and dependents, if any). Provided that any such loan shall be recoverable from the applicant or a guarantor within an agreed period. See annex E.

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14. Falsification of information relating to medical applications will be considered fraudulent and may be subject to legal action.
15. Patients must travel when the Medical Officer says, not when it suits them. Failure to do so could result in your medical condition becoming worse. The Medical Officer will not arrange for an alternative date for medical appointment/s.

### **Annexes**

Annex A - Pitcairn Island Health Charges Doc

Annex B - GPI Medivac Procedure Doc

Annex C - GPI MO Medivac Application Form Doc

Annex D - GPI Medivac Repayment Contract Form

Annex E - GPI Employee Confidentiality Policy

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