Telephone Health Advisory Service On-Call

The Telephone Health Advisory Service is a key component of the ministry’s commitment to providing comprehensive, accessible, and coordinated primary health care services 24 hours a day, seven days a week. It is an after-hours telephone health advice and triage service for patients enrolled in primary health care groups in Ontario.

Patients who call the Telephone Health Advisory Service have access to Ontario registered nurses who provide them with symptom-based health advice and information.

What does OHIP fund?

OHIP funds after-hours primary care including the Telephone Health Advisory Service for patients enrolled in primary health care groups.

What changes are included in the 2012 Physician Services Agreement and why?

• Until now, family physicians working in enrolled group practices were required to be on-call at scheduled times to the Telephone Health Advisory Service to give the service’s nurses access to physician advice if needed. Physicians were paid a monthly payment to do this.
• Physicians providing on-call coverage to the service have received much fewer calls than expected. As a result, due to the low volume of calls compared to the cost of the service, physicians will no longer be required to provide on-call support to this service and the on-call payment will be discontinued. Physicians may continue to be on-call to the Telephone Health Advisory Service on a voluntary basis.
• The Telephone Health Advisory Service will continue to be available; the only change will be that physicians will not be obligated to be on-call to the Telephone Health Advisory Service provider.

Will patients continue to be funded by OHIP for after-hours primary care assistance?

Yes, patients will continue to be covered under OHIP for after-hours access to primary care through the Telehealth Health Advisory Service, Telehealth Ontario local after-hours clinics, and physician paging services for services such as obstetrics and palliative care.

What are the savings from this change in the first and second years of the Agreement?

• Physician fee savings: $3.0 million (2012/13); $12 million (2013/14).
When is this change effective?

This change is effective January 1, 2013.

For More Information

OHIP InfoBulletin #4585

http://www.health.gov.on.ca/english/providers/program/ohip/bulletins/4000/bul4585.pdf