

**Clinical Commissioning Policy:  
Funding policy for travel and  
accommodation proton overseas  
programme**

**April 2013**

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# **NHS England**

## **Funding Policy for Travel and Accommodation Proton Overseas Programme**

**Prepared by the Proton Therapy Clinical Reference Panel**

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ADOPTED

The aim of this document is to describe what non-medical costs will be met by NHS England for patients being referred overseas for proton therapy.

Since April 1<sup>st</sup> 2008, the treatment of patients receiving proton therapy for certain types of cancer has been funded nationally; from April 2013 the responsibility will sit with NHS England. Funding is available for patients resident in England who qualify for NHS treatment. Patients need to be referred to the Proton Therapy Clinical Reference Panel (CRG) by their physicians. The panel assesses if the patient meets the criteria for NHS funded treatment. As no UK-based treatment centre currently exists, patients are then referred overseas for treatment.

Patients in Scotland, Wales and Northern Ireland fall under the scope of their devolved administrations. Further information about the referral process and types of cancers for which patients are referred can be found on the NHS England website.

The Healthcare Travel Costs Scheme is applicable to patients being treated within the UK. It is not normal practice for patients' travel costs to be funded, unless the patient is receiving either Income Support, Income-based Job Seekers Allowance or Pension Guarantee Credit.

The NHS recognises that the travel & accommodation costs for patients being treated in Europe or North America exceed costs that would usually be incurred by travel for treatment within the UK and would place a significant burden on families. Therefore the NHS will fund travel and accommodation costs for the proton therapy patient being treated overseas, plus costs for a carer(s)/parent(s) accompanying the patient, subject to the conditions outlined in this policy. The most important test in deciding arrangements is clinical justification. However, expenses and costs will be audited and any exceptional expenditure may need to be supported and justified by the referring hospital.

If any other treatment episodes become necessary abroad e.g. further elective neurosurgical interventions, these will need to be approved through separate funding mechanisms and are not covered by the responsibility of the Proton Overseas Programme.

The NHS will not fund the cost of medical treatment carried out in North America that is not directly related to the course of proton therapy being carried out.

## **2. COSTS REFUNDABLE FOR PATIENT AND CARER/PARENT TRAVELLING FOR TREATMENT WITHIN THE EUROPEAN ECONOMIC AREA (EEA)**

### **2.1 Travel within Europe**

The referring NHS Trust is expected to coordinate administrative arrangements for the patient, including organising travel to and accommodation at the treatment centre, payment for travel and the reclaiming of costs from NNS England. Payment for accommodation costs for the treatment period will be coordinated between NHS England and the treatment centre. The patient is not be expected to take on the burden of organising their travel and accommodation but should be fully consulted. There will be appointments for assessment and planning before treatment starts and these are similar to those for conventional radiotherapy. Two trips may therefore be required.

- An economy class return fare from the UK to an appropriate airport near the treatment centre will be funded for the patient and one carer for adults (unless an exceptional case has been made due to physical impairment of the patient in which case two carers may go with the patient) and two parents or carers for paediatric patients.
- Travel to/from airports or Eurotunnel to/from patient's accommodation/home address will also be funded at public transport costs.
- Exceptional cases of physical or functional impairment may justify more than one carer for adults. Information should be provided on the referral form. Travel for two separate episodes, an initial visit for the assessment and a second for the course of treatment may be funded. Transport arrangements should be based on standard or economy fares and take advantage of reduced fares wherever possible.
- The NHS will fund the costs of transport between the place of accommodation and the treatment centre but costs must be carefully managed and based on public transport where available. Low cost hire car packages if cheaper than daily public transport will be funded by the NHS for the treatment episode.
- If a patient wishes to use their car to drive from England to a European location for treatment, then the cost of petrol, ferries and tolls will be funded (in lieu of an air ticket) on condition that:
  - 1) receipts are provided to back up the costs claimed
  - 2) commissioners are informed of the make of car and miles to the gallon.

Please note that ONLY the cost of petrol, ferries and tolls from England to the European location will be funded. Internal travel within Europe, not associated with treatment, will not be funded nor any insurance costs associated with this.

## **2.2 Accommodation within Europe**

The cost of accommodation will be funded. Choice of accommodation will be coordinated between the patient's (family) treating centre and referring centre. Costs for the accommodation for the treatment episode will usually be coordinated between the commissioner and the treatment centre. Only accommodation suggested by the treatment centre may be used. Excess costs arising from any higher quality accommodation will need to be borne by the patient.

For the visit for the initial assessment, one single room will be funded if the patient has travelled alone. If the patient has travelled with a carer or parent, then either one double room or two single rooms will be funded. When a second parent accompanies the patient then a double and a single room will be funded.

For the initial assessment, accommodation will be funded for the duration of the assessment period. If the patient's assessment stay needs to be extended to cover additional tests the extended stay will be funded as medically required.

Patients/families will usually be required to sign an accommodation contract. Any damages or breakages associated with the accommodation will be the financial responsibility of the signatory to the contract and not the NHS.

## **2.3 Insurance within Europe**

Travel Insurance will not be refunded. It is recommended that patients take out travel insurance for the duration of their period abroad. It should be remembered that to access state-funded treatment for any other condition or treatment unrelated to proton therapy treatment required whilst in Europe, a European Health Insurance Card (EHIC) is needed for each member of the travelling party. The EHIC can be used to cover any necessary medical treatment due to either an accident or illness within the European Economic Area (EEA). The EHIC entitles the holder to state-provided medical treatment within the country they are visiting. EHIC cards may take seven days to arrive after an online application and so an application should be made in good time. Application details are available at: <http://www.ehic.org>

Passport costs will not be refunded by the NHS.

## **2.4 Meals within Europe**

The NHS will not fund the cost of meals or refreshments.

## **3. COSTS REFUNDABLE FOR PATIENT AND CARER / PARENT TRAVELLING FOR TREATMENT TO NORTH AMERICA**

### **3.1 Travel to North America**

- An economy class return fare from the UK to an airport near the treatment centre will be funded for the patient and one carer for adults (unless an exceptional case has been made due to physical impairment of the patient in which case two carers may go with the patient) and two parents or carers for paediatric patients.
- Travel to/from airports to/from patient's accommodation/home address will also be funded at public transport costs
- Exceptional cases of physical or functional impairment may justify more than one carer for adults. Information should be provided on the referral form. Transport arrangements should be based on standard or economy fares and take advantage of reduced fares wherever possible.
- The treatment centre will liaise with patients and families to organise their transport requirements. The NHS will fund the costs of car hire whilst in the US and the costs of petrol needed for travel for treatment. A standard car hire package has been agreed by the NHS with the treatment centre and costs will be coordinated between the treatment centre and the commissioner. Families should not therefore hire a car independently. Any upgrades to the package agreed will be at the patient's /family's expense. Costs of taxis to and from treatment will be funded if car hire is not an option.

As a guide to booking flights, patients would usually need to be in the USA for nine weeks – that is two weeks for assessment plus an average of seven weeks treatment time. The treatment period will be variable depending on the tumour type. The treatment centre will be able to advise further prior to booking flights. The usual and most economic practice is for return flights to be booked in advance due to the high costs of open tickets. If a change needs to be made to the date of return for a flight there is usually a fee of around £100 (+fare difference), which the NHS will refund. The UK referring team should book flights and patients (families) will need to contact them a few weeks prior to the patient's scheduled completion date so that the team in the UK can change the return flight date if necessary.

### **3.2 Accommodation in North America**

The treatment centre patient liaison teams will liaise with patients and families to organise their accommodation requirements. The payment for accommodation will be organised between the NHS and the overseas centres. Patients will not need to pay for any accommodation costs themselves (unless they have upgraded outside of the NHS package). In this instance, the NHS will only refund a cost equivalent to the cost of the standard accommodation. Patients/families will need to pay the balance.

The treatment centres in North America are;

University of Florida Proton Therapy Institute

[NHSpatients@floridaproton.org](mailto:NHSpatients@floridaproton.org)

ProCure Proton Therapy Centre, Oklahoma

Contact: [intakenurse@okc.procure.com](mailto:intakenurse@okc.procure.com)

Patients and carer(s) are often accommodated in either the Ronald McDonald House (for paediatric cases) or a local hotel for a short time whilst the patient elects where to stay for the remainder of the treatment period with the help of the centre's staff.

Other accommodation suggested by the treatment centre may be taken but any excess costs arising from this or any higher quality accommodation will need to be borne by the patient. It is important that patients and their carers stay quite close to the hospital.

For the course of treatment, accommodation will be funded for a short period of time prior to and post-treatment as medically necessary.

Patients/families may be required to sign an accommodation contract. Any damages or breakages associated with the accommodation will be the financial responsibility of the signatory to the contract and not the NHS.

### **3.3 Insurance for North America**

Patients and families should not travel to North America without full travel insurance being purchased. The patient's pre-existing condition for which they are receiving proton therapy must be declared. Insurance to cover the costs of care associated with a patient's cancer treatment is not necessary as these costs will be funded by the NHS. The cost of travel insurance for the duration of the necessary stay in the USA up to



£10 million of personal injury/medical cover for the patient and carers in line with this policy, will be refunded by the NHS. Copies of the insurance policy will need to be lodged with the commissioner before the family travel for treatment in order that the costs of the policy may be reimbursed.

It is the patient's and family's responsibility to ensure that they have adequate insurance coverage for the period of their stay in line with the paragraph above. Patients/families are responsible for the cost of insurance associated with any extension to their stay not associated with their cancer treatment. If families want to extend their stay then they need to arrangement insurance for any additional time overseas.

### **3.4 Meals in North America**

The NHS will not fund the cost of meals or refreshments.

### **3.5 ESTA Visa Waiver Programme**

Patients and carers need to complete an ESTA Visa Waiver. This will permit them to stay in the US for up to 90 days only. The NHS will refund the cost of ESTAs for patients and carers. Applications for ESTA Visa Waivers can be made via this link:

[ESTA - Welcome to the Electronic System for Travel Authorization Web Site](#)

#### **4. PROCEDURE FOR REIMBURSING CLAIMS**

The patient's referring organisation, usually the local hospital trust, will be expected to arrange the patient's travel for treatment and will help with liaison concerning accommodation. In the first instance, payments are normally expected to be made by the patient's referring hospital. The referring hospital can then invoice NHS England for costs in line with this policy.

Hospitals are asked to first email copies of receipts to NHS England with a summary sheet detailing costs in order that the commissioner can confirm reimbursement in line with this policy. Once costs have been cleared an invoice should be either emailed or posted to the commissioner. Contact details are as follows:

X24FMARLEY  
NHS England  
X24 Payables K005  
Phoenix House  
Topcliffe Lane  
Wakefield  
WF3 1WE

The NHS will not normally make payments to patients or referring organisations in advance of treatment. Costs outside of this policy will not be funded. **Expenses must be sent to the Commissioner within six months of the patient returning to the UK or they will not be refunded.**

Any queries on what costs the NHS will cover should be addressed to Angelina Summers and telephone 0113 20 68602 and fax 0113 2067561.

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