

Increasing Efficiency for More Accessible Health Care and Services (Dental Health Care)

Improving Access to Health Care and Services (dental health care) is the improvement on dental care provided by public and private partners. This will provide all insured persons with equal access to dental care, thereby addressing differences in economic inequality.

The Social Security Office (SSO) is responsible for providing social insurance benefit for insured persons in the non-work related cases which include injury, sickness, invalidity or death, maternity, child allowance, old-age and unemployment. At present, 11,852,946 insured persons have been registered with the SSO. Insured persons, employers and the government are required by law to pay contributions at equal rate which is prescribed by the Ministerial Regulations. Qualifying conditions for benefits are based upon the paid contributions of an insured person. The Social Security Office (SSO) is responsible for providing social insurance benefit for insured persons in the non-work related cases which include injury, sickness, invalidity or death, maternity, child allowance, old-age and unemployment. The Social Security Act B.E. 2533 stipulates that insured persons shall be required to pay contributions not less than 3 months within 15 months before the date of receiving the medical treatment which cover all services for both inpatient and outpatient care. Nevertheless, 14 medical treatments are excluded, such as the treatments which are in the process of experimental research, the treatment of infertility, sex reassignment surgery, artificial insemination and dental service etc.

The SSO has continuously developed its schemes to promote the overall welfare of insured persons. The SSO is aware that oral health is important and connected to overall health. Hence the decision to expand dental benefit for insured persons. This includes tooth extraction, filing and scaling. In 2007, the SSO added dental implant into the programme. In obtaining the dental care, an insured person would visit any public and private hospitals throughout the country and would bring the receipt to reimburse in accordance with the prescribed rate.

The 2012-2016 data on dental service demonstrated that the number of tooth extraction, filing, scaling and tooth impaction surgery was significant (1.73 million cases per year). It shows that there were many insured persons who may not know they were eligible to reimburse the expense from the SSO. A great number of insured persons never claimed dental benefit out of concern that dental care might be too costly. This resulted in limited access to dental service.

Therefore, the SSO has introduced a new measure required only the Smart ID Card to improve access to health care and services. Insured persons can now receive dental services of tooth extraction, filing, scaling and tooth impact surgery at every contracted hospitals without having to pay in advance,

provided it does not exceed 900 Baht per year. The hospitals will reimburse through SSO e-claim system. The measure was launched in the fourth week of October 2016 and has been in operation since 1 January 2017.

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In order to achieve the ultimate goal, support from both policy makers and technical officers are essential due to time constraints and nuances in the implementation. The necessary actions by the SSO are as follows:

1. issuance of a SSO Notification calling for new medical providers to perform dental services to insured persons;
2. decentralisation of the administration in order to transfer decision-making authority of and responsibility for medical providers selection and sign a Memorandum on the provisions of dental services to the insured persons between the SSO and the medical providers;
3. provision of network cooperation among government agencies and affiliated hospitals to offer dental services for the insured persons without having to pay in advance, such as the Ministry of Public Health, the Ministry of Defense and the Veteran General Hospital. These institutions are welcome to cooperate with the SSO; and
4. creation of a website equipped with verification software which is able to verify the entitlements of the insured persons and the medical provider to reimburse through e-Claim.

During the application process for new hospital to provide the dental services between December 2016 to April 2017, 653 private hospitals and dental clinics signed a Memorandum on the provision of dental services with the SSO; the number of new medical providers is also increasing. As regard the public hospitals under the Ministry of Public Health and the Ministry of Defense, they are expected to be able to perform the service in the near future.

According to the SSO statistic performance as of January – March, 2017, there were 283,262 dental service cases provided to the insured persons at the contracted hospitals without paying in advance or 32% of total dental services in that period.

In summary, the increase of efficiency for more accessible health care and services (dental health care) appears to serve the need of the insured persons. Relevant labour groups considered this measure beneficial and applauded the SSO regarding the efficiency of its implementation. Most of the insured persons are happy with the SSO's performance of the plan. A satisfaction survey shows an increase from 4.48 (September – December 2016) to 4.52 (January – March 2017). Moreover, the SSO's measure is consistent with and supportive of the Thailand 4.0 policy and the 20-Year National Strategy in striking the balance and in the development of government agencies by improving its services delivery.

