

Monday 5th November, 2012

The Honourable Tanya Plibersek
Minister for Health
P O Box 6022
House of Representatives
Parliament House
Canberra
ACT 2600

Dear Minister

Re: Removal of Medicare Funding Hyperbaric Oxygen Therapy (HBOT).

I am a 53 year old female who earlier this year was diagnosed with the very rare condition of Pyoderma Gangrenosum. I have had a very painful chronic ulcer on my right ankle since 2006 which will not completely heal and now have two deep, painful chronic ulcers on my left shin. One developed in June of 2011 and the other developed in January of this year after a severe case of cellulitis.

The pain of this debilitating condition is constant and there are many nights I do not sleep. I have also been diagnosed with depression, plus had numerous testes for diabetes. Since November of 2011 I have been having specialised treatment with a dermatologist, however the ulcers only get to a partial healing stage then infection sets into the wounds and no amount of treatment helps.

I have been admitted to hospital 4 times this year to have the ulcers on the left leg cleaned and debrided, plus two attempts of split skin grafts, (both grafts failed). Each admission to hospital was extremely hard as not only is the treatment painful but I am away from my family for weeks on end.

I have had to give up work due to not being able to stand for long periods (cannot stand for more than two hours at a time) and taking a high dosages of pain relief, plus of course having open wounds. These wounds were being dressed on a daily basis this has been decreased to every second day and each dressing change is very painful.

Recently my dermatologist referred me to Hyperbaric Health located at Brunswick Private Hospital in the hopes that, HBOT would help finally heal the ulcers as they have reached "a good stage" as the doctors have put it. I was given a transcutaneous oxygen measurement test which indicated I have significant tissue hypoxia and would be an excellent candidate to receive HBOT.

I was informed this week that due to the Government removing Medicare Funding (13015) for non - diabetic problem wounds I am no longer able to receive this treatment unless I fund it myself privately. At \$450.00 per treatment and I would need 30-40 sessions I am afraid this is out of my reach.

Two weeks ago I thought I was on the road to getting my life back now that has been taken away from me again. I walk with a permanent limp plus have back pain, and shoulder pain which has been diagnosed as being associated with having to use crutches for long periods of time after the numerous operations I have had to endure.

I am positive if you had this debilitating problem you would fight so you could get the medical treatment you deserve.

With the removal of funding you will have patients with chronic ulcers being admitted to hospitals due to not being able to receive HBOT treatment and having to revert back to straightforward wound care. The majority of these patients you will find their ulcers will not heal. This will put a strain on already hard working hospital staff plus use up valuable resources that could be put to other

Attached are photos to show how disgusting my leg looks. I know I will carry the scars with me for the rest of my life however to have the wounds closed would be a blessing and perhaps I could have some kind of normal life once again.

I strongly urge you and your team to reconsider your decision to remove Medicare Funding for Chronic Hypoxic Wounds.

Yours faithfully