**Alberta benchmark dental fees**

At the end of each year, most provincial dental associations release suggested fee guides for the coming year. There is no formal requirement for dental professionals to adopt these provincial fee guides; however, they use the information to ensure the amounts charged to patients are reasonable and fair (for both dentist and patient) compared to the amounts suggested by their provincial dental associations. Insurance companies and dental plan sponsors also rely on the fee guides for planning purposes and to help establish the amount of coverage available to plan members on a procedure-by-procedure, province-by-province basis.

One notable exception is the Alberta Dental Association (ADA) which hasn’t published a fee guide since 1997. Instead, the ADA surveys its members each year to obtain information about fees being charged for the majority of dental procedures. The insurance industry, in conjunction with the Canadian Life and Health Insurance Association, uses the survey results—considered along with other factors such as past claims and the fees being charged in other provinces—to determine a benchmark level of insurance coverage appropriate for dental procedures in Alberta. This benchmark ensures proposed fee increases are fair and accurately reflect the situation in Alberta.

Looking back at the overall average dental fee increases since 1996, it’s possible to compare figures for provinces that issue suggested fee guides (such as Ontario and British Columbia) to Alberta (where no provincial fee guide is published). This
retrospective shows year-by-year dental fee increases in Alberta have been consistent
with increases in other provinces.

Dental fee increases (%) in Ontario, Alberta and British Columbia (1996 to 2004)

In 1998 and 1999, dental fees in Alberta were paid at the
1997 fee guide levels (0.0% increase). This led to a larger
than usual increase in 2000 as the insurance industry played
“catch up.”

You can review the annual dental fee increases by province and read more about the
approach in Alberta on our Web site. Go to www.manulife.ca/groupbenefits, click on
“Newsletters” and look under “Past Issues” for “Dental Care.”

Sources: Alberta Dental Association, Ontario Dental Association, Association of Dental
Surgeons of British Columbia.