Assessment guideline for new surgical equipment, investigations, implants or interventional procedures ("Surgical Technologies")

Southern Cross does not specify the exact operative procedure used or equipment employed, this being the domain of the surgeon's expertise according to accepted standard practice.

Southern Cross will not reimburse a Surgical Technology if it is developmental/experimental in nature or of a quality that does not meet current international regulatory or manufacturing standards.
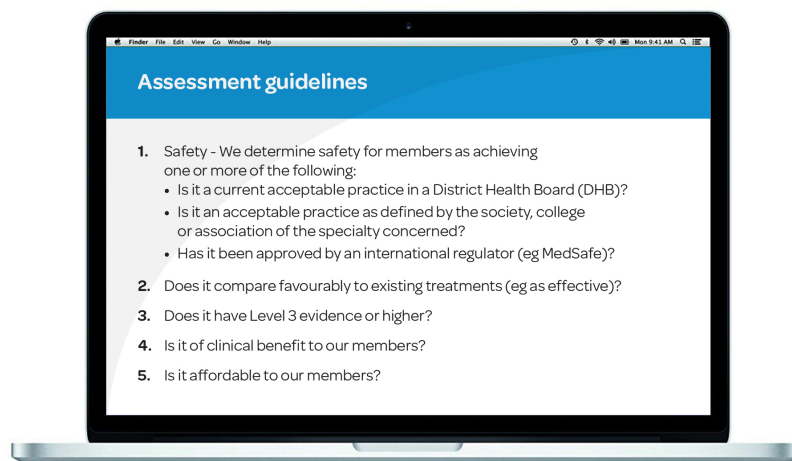
Novel surgical procedures or equipment, investigations and implants proposed to be employed during surgery, and not covered by the fee usually paid by Southern Cross, will be assessed based on evidence of superiority in outcomes.

Outcomes may include the following: operative outcome (ie achievement of the goals of the operation as perceived by the patient); safety, including both the recovery period and longer term; and duration of hospitalisation.

Evidence from time-concurrent controlled randomised clinical trials is preferred over historical controls, though in the absence of any established therapy or satisfactory comparator good quality historical control data may be satisfactory.

A claim of superior performance as compared with existing Surgical Technologies will need to be supported by adequate randomised controlled clinical trial data. When data are based on international experience, the need for development of local expertise (eg training and other aspects of implementation) may also be taken into consideration prior to reimbursement decisions.

Surgical Technologies not meeting these levels of evidence will be regarded as developmental / experimental. A cost-benefit assessment will be undertaken if these levels of evidence are met.

Assessment guidelines

1. Safety - We determine safety for members as achieving one or more of the following:
   - Is it a current acceptable practice in a District Health Board (DHB)?
   - Is it an acceptable practice as defined by the society, college or association of the specialty concerned?
   - Has it been approved by an international regulator (eg MedSafe)?
2. Does it compare favourably to existing treatments (eg as effective)?
3. Does it have Level 3 evidence or higher?
4. Is it of clinical benefit to our members?
5. Is it affordable to our members?

Assessment process

Receive Application → Rapid Assessment → Full Assessment → Prioritisation → Risk Committee Review → Board Review → Implement Cover

These are guidelines only. Ultimately Southern Cross has sole discretion as to whether it funds a new technique or technology and Southern Cross reserves the right to apply or amend these guidelines in its sole discretion.