



PRESS RELEASE

No: 77/2011

Date: 18th March 2011

The statement from the Opposition Spokesman for Health, Neil Costa, regarding prescriptions for persons aged 60 and over, is incorrect.

Entitlement to free prescriptions is a matter of law, not of policy. The law prescribes that all persons not in employment are entitled to free prescriptions. In the case of a married couple, if one of the partners is in employment and paying Social Insurance, under the law he or she is considered to be a registered contributor to the Group Practice Medical Scheme, and as such, neither the contributor or his/her dependants are entitled to exempt status.

It is not true, as Mr Costa claims, that “in the past, everyone aged 60 or over did not have to pay, whether or not they worked”. Neither is it true, or indeed legally viable, that “the previous administration had a policy on this law whereby people did not have to pay for their prescriptions when they reached the age of 60, even if they worked”.

The Minister for Health, Yvette Del Agua said: “there has not been a change in policy, nor is a new policy now being applied by the GHA. The law is being applied in exactly the same manner as it was applied during the GSLP administration. In fact, the only change that has occurred, is that this Government thought it right to amend the law in 1998 in order to entitle pensioners to free prescriptions, thereby rectifying the practice presided over by the GSLP administration whereby pensioners had to pay 20p for each item on their prescriptions, and again in 1999 to restrict the amount that patients had to pay for one prescription to £7.50. The GSLP administration did not deem it necessary to make these beneficial changes for patients during their 8 years in Government”.

In order to allay any concerns that might have arisen as a result of Mr Costa's incorrect statement, the GHA would like to reassure the public that all persons over the age of 60 years who are not in employment and whose spouse is not in employment, will continue to receive free prescriptions. The Government

deeply regrets any unnecessary anxiety that may have been caused to pensioners as a result of Mr Costa's attempt to play politics with false statements. Nothing has changed either on prescriptions or on the GSLP's political style.