

Doing business online

Canberra GPs now online with Medicare Australia

Doctors at the Deakin Medical Centre in Canberra have joined a growing list of Australian health care providers who are now able to do all of their Medicare claiming via the internet.

Practice manager Dr Basil Lau said Deakin Medical Centre upgraded to online claiming through Medicare Australia at the same time they implemented a new software package because they saw online claiming as much more convenient.

Medicare Australia's online claiming, which has been available since March 2002, allows health care providers to process and submit bulk bill and private patient claims via the internet as well as make online notifications to the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register.

Staff can also use the online system to instantly verify a patient's Medicare details.

Deakin Medical Centre is a small practice which operates six days a week and although it requires payment from most patients, it does bulk bill children.

Dr Lau said Deakin Medical Centre was using Medicare Australia's online services to process and submit its bulk bill claims.

'We mostly use online claiming for bulk billing. We submit claims about twice a week,' he said. 'It's quicker for reporting and the payments come back faster.'

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Dr Lau said the practice had the capacity to process claims on behalf of patients but to date had not really offered the service.

In practices which use the private patient claiming facility, patients either choose to pay in full or just the gap and then either request a cheque from Medicare or have their rebate paid directly into a bank account. They can also take a receipt to Medicare for same-day payment.

Dr Lau said the practice was still in the process of setting-up access to the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register.

Once it's up and running, doctors will be able to submit

immunisation data directly to the register, without having to send in paperwork.

As someone who's more accustomed with blood vessels and bones than bits and bytes, Dr Lau believed the process of applying for and installing Medicare Australia's online claiming seemed a little difficult.

'Setting it up wasn't too hard because the software people were there to help, but I think if you're not computer literate you will struggle a little bit,' he said.

While Deakin Medical Centre did not have direct help from Medicare Australia during the set-up process, business development officers are available in most areas to assist.

Medicare Australia provides detailed instructions on setting-up and using the system and offers the additional support of a telephone helpdesk. Dr Lau said that he had called on the help of Medicare Australia staff from time to time and found them helpful.

