

# Doing business online

## Faster Medicare claims for regional patients with online claiming

As the principal of a small rural practice with just a handful of GPs and staff, Dr Alan Tran embraces any new technology that can save his practice time and money.

Despite being a relatively new practice, at just three years old, the West Street Medical Centre and Skin Cancer Clinic in the Great Lakes district of regional New South Wales was still using a manual system before installing Medicare Australia's online claiming.

'We were about to go online with Medclaims (an electronic system for bulk bill claiming) but that was being phased out so we waited until we could use Medicare Australia's online claiming,' Dr Tran said.

In addition to the \$1000 regional practice incentive grant provided to upgrade to Medicare Australia's online claiming, the practice also received Australian Government support to upgrade its communications infrastructure to broadband.

After making the decision to upgrade to Medicare Australia's online claiming, Dr Tran contacted one of the many software vendors who offered computer software compatible with the system.

Dr Tran said he had experienced some delays in acquiring the software from his supplier and he described the process of obtaining the relevant PKI security certificates as a little complicated.

Security certificates are required by users of Medicare Australia's online claiming to ensure data is encrypted for maximum protection of patient data.

But as someone who's switched on to technology, Dr Tran said installing and running the new system was easy. Medicare Australia was also there to provide support and advice through its six-day-a-week helpdesk.

'In the end, it was pretty straightforward,' he said.

Dr Tran said the reference material provided by Medicare Australia was very helpful and the support provided by staff was excellent.

Since installing Medicare Australia's online claiming about six months ago, Dr Tran has seen a marked improvement in productivity and that's good news for his business's bottom line.

'Medicare Australia's online claiming is more efficient, there's less hours involved and less paperwork than with manual batching. It's streamlined our workload a lot,' he said.

The practice processes a large number of bulk billing claims, which can now be done in real time using Medicare Australia's online claiming.

'Compared to manual batching I'd say we're saving about 60 to 70 per cent of time by using Medicare Australia's online claiming,' he said.

Seeing an improved turnaround time for payments was one of the biggest bonuses for the business, Dr Tran said.

It was also satisfying to be able to offer patients a more convenient private claims process. In Forster, where the practice is based, there is no Medicare office. Until Medicare Australia's online claiming came along patients requiring a refund had to fax off their claim form from the local chemist, which is half an hour's drive away, and wait for the cheque to be returned some time later.

'Although it's only a small part of the practice, those who do have to pay are very happy that they no longer need to fax off a claim form from the chemist,' Dr Tran said.

In summing up the experience of the switch, the doctor said he was very satisfied.

'I wouldn't go back,' he said. 'Life is so much more simple and straightforward with Medicare Australia's online claiming.'

