

Doing business online

New online system offers convenience for patients

Being able to offer patients the convenience of instant claiming, rather than a trip to the Medicare office, was central to Maroochydore 7 Day Medical Centre's decision to upgrade its administration system to Medicare Australia's online claiming.

The large general practice, which operates with a total of 14 doctors and 18 support staff, services a largely transient population on Queensland's Sunshine Coast.

Practice manager Judy Lum said in order to run Medicare Australia's online claiming, the practice had to install a full software upgrade and connect to the internet using broadband.

They received financial help with this from the Australian Government.

'Originally we were full bulk billing all patients between 8 am and 5 pm on weekdays, but were considering making the change to mixed billing. We preferred to be running Medicare Australia's online claiming when we made the changeover for the convenience of our private patients,' Ms Lum said.

Helpful support staff made the transition easier

After making the decision to move forward with the upgrade, Ms Lum said she was extremely happy with the support and assistance provided by Medicare Australia.

'When we applied to have Medicare Australia's online claiming installed, Medicare Australia staff phoned us on a regular basis to check whether we required any help or advice. The support staff were very helpful.

'And if we have any problems, they are normally rectified with one phone call,' Ms Lum said.

Since making the change to Medicare Australia's online claiming, the centre has found the transmission and processing of claims online is much faster than under the previous electronic claiming system.

'We've found that we've been able to transmit our claims and get payments back in about three working days compared to the old method where we could wait up to two weeks for payment. We have a few problems with rejections but that's really a software issue, not Medicare Australia's.'

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Making life easier for patients

Ms Lum said that as expected, patients had embraced the opportunity to have the practice process their Medicare claims on the spot.

‘When the patient phones for an appointment, we advise them to bring their banking details if they would like the Medicare rebate paid directly into their account in three working days. They also have the option of having a cheque mailed to their home address.

‘Some patients prefer to collect their refund from a Medicare office on the same day, however those that prefer to use online claiming are very happy with the service,’ she said.

Save time and money with online claiming

In addition to making life easier for the patients, using Medicare Australia’s online claiming has also streamlined processes for staff.

‘It’s easier because we don’t have to chase the doctors to get a signed form back to send in with the claim,’ she said, ‘we just do it all online.’

Not having to post forms was also saving the practice significant mailing and stationery costs.

And better still, the swift turn around time for payments from Medicare Australia meant the business was in a better financial position. Claims can now be processed and paid in as little as three days for Medicare and slightly longer for Department of Veterans’ Affairs.

‘From a cash flow perspective, that’s been very good for the doctors,’ Ms Lum said.

While Maroochydore 7 Day Medical Centre has embraced most of what Medicare Australia’s online claiming has to offer, including private claims and those under Medicare and the Department of Veterans’ Affairs, it has not yet started using the system to transfer data to the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register.

‘We’re not using the services to their full potential at the moment, but we’ll certainly look at the childhood vaccination reports in the near future,’ she said. ‘Once we are using all of Medicare Australia’s online claiming, I know the practice will have the benefit of much more streamlined and more efficient processes and procedures.’

In summing up Medicare Australia’s online claiming, Ms Lum said the change had been very positive.