

# Doing business online

## Small community, big benefits flow from online Medicare claiming

In the small outer metropolitan community of Samford Valley in Queensland, the locals these days have one less reason to go to town; and they don't mind one little bit.

Since their local doctor's office started using Medicare Australia's online claiming in 2002, the residents of Samford Valley have enjoyed the convenience of being able to claim back their Medicare rebate without making a trip to the Medicare office.

Samford Valley Medical Centre was the first general practice in Australia to upgrade to full online claiming.

Medicare Australia's online claiming was still being refined in 2002 but today is a complete e-business facility that allows health care providers to do business with Medicare Australia quickly and securely over the internet.

Practice manager at Samford Valley, Shantyl Lye, who was a receptionist at the practice when Medicare Australia's online claiming started, said even though the services were new for everyone, learning to use it was effortless.

'When we had the launch the software people took us through it step by step and it was just the easiest thing to pick up,' Ms Lye said.

'Now I don't know what we'd do without it.'

As the practice manager, Ms Lye fully appreciates the business benefits of having Medicare Australia's online claiming.

***'These days I do my claims on a Friday and they're paid by Monday. It's just so much quicker.'***

'We were bulk billing when we first got Medicare Australia's online claiming and the main thing I noticed was that it was much faster, even though we were only using dial-up internet.

'Then we stopped bulk billing for about 18 months and so we didn't really use it much, but when we upgraded to broadband and went back to bulk billing again we really noticed the difference,' she said.



Ms Lye said Medicare Australia's online claiming allowed staff to verify a patient's Medicare details instantly and process their claim online. For bulk bill claims the practice received full payment for the consultation in super-fast time.

'Having Medicare Australia's online claiming makes it a lot easier because you don't have to spend as much time creating the claim, it's all on the computer in front of you. And with bulk bill claims you don't have to pack all the vouchers into an envelope and send them off to Medicare, or wait four weeks until you get the cheque back.

'These days I do my claims on a Friday and they're paid by Monday. It's just so much quicker,' she said.

'One of the things I like the most about Medicare Australia's online claiming though is being able to verify people's Medicare cards online, because the number of people who don't bring their Medicare card to a doctor's appointment is unbelievable,' Ms Lye said.

And while all that's great for the practice, what the community of Samford loves is how Medicare Australia's online claiming allows them to finalise their payment in just one transaction.

'A lot of the people who live in Samford don't really leave Samford,' Ms Lye said.

'If you live in Samford, you generally do everything in Samford.

'But because the closest Medicare office would probably be 15 minutes away, it's always been a hassle for our patients, especially the few older ones we have.'

'Now we can help them out by processing their claim right here and they can either get a cheque sent to them or have their rebate paid straight into their bank account.'

In summing up Medicare Australia's online claiming, Ms Lye said the bottom line was that the less paper her staff had to deal with, the more effectively things ran.

'The fact that it doesn't take as much time means it has definitely saved us money and because it's online you don't even have to pay for postage,' she said.

Ms Lye said she believed every Australian practice should be using Medicare Australia's online claiming.

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