

Doing business online

Mannum sets the benchmark in industry best practice

It may be a small country practice on the banks of the Murray River in South Australia but Mannum Medical Associates is proving that small doesn't mean out of touch.

The team of seven doctors, three practice nurses and reception staff at Mannum is not only a vital local practice but also a teaching facility for medical students. And it has embraced the latest in industry best practice by upgrading to online claiming.

Practice manager Mary Underwood said the practice upgraded its computer system and moved to online claiming in January 2005, when they heard about the new services being offered by Medicare Australia.

'We were anxious to go to online claiming when we heard about it,' Mrs Underwood said.

That's because Medicare Australia's online claiming puts a patient's Medicare records right at the medical receptionist's fingertips and allows practices to process bulk bill and private patient claims without patients having to visit their local Medicare office.

'The patients really appreciate it.'



Dr Stephen Napoli at work at Mannum Medical Associates in South Australia. Online claiming has blended easily into the practice's day-to-day operations

It also provides practices with a direct link to the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register.

Feedback so far from practices that use online claiming shows consistently that the system is faster, more efficient, has improved accuracy and provides additional convenience for private patients.

Mrs Underwood said the move to the new claiming system at their practice went extremely smoothly and online claiming blended easily into the practice's day-to-day operations.



'It required very little training to use and it's just so user friendly,' she said.

With online claiming, the practice can now batch and send all of their bulk bill claims to Medicare Australia daily using the internet. The data is encrypted with PKI security and if there's an error, the staff are notified immediately so the problem can be fixed. Within two days, the doctors have received payment from Medicare Australia directly to their bank accounts.

Mrs Underwood described online claiming as 'the best thing since sliced bread' because not only did it make bulk bill claiming quicker and easier, online claiming also allowed Mannum to process private patient claims in real time, while

the patient waited. Patients could choose to receive their Medicare rebate either by cheque, which took a couple of weeks, or deposited straight into their bank account within a few days.

'Everyone's taken to it like a duck takes to water,' Mrs Underwood said.

'The patients really appreciate it.'

Mrs Underwood said she found the practice to be running much more smoothly since they switched to online claiming.

'And that's what the staff say out the front too; they just think it's wonderful,' she said.

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