

# Doing business online

## Instant access to Medicare details and faster payment key benefits of online claiming

Manager at the Derwent Valley Medical Centre in rural Tasmania Annette Tomkinson says her practice has not looked back since switching to online claiming for their bulk bill payments.

'In the very beginning we had a few hiccups but certainly the support that we've had from Medicare Australia has been excellent,' Ms Tomkinson said.

In a practice with seven GPs servicing about 10,000 patients and with 90 per cent of those bulk billed, Ms Tomkinson said online claiming had vastly improved the practice's cash flow.

Since switching to the new internet-based method, Derwent Valley Medical Centre had been receiving full payment for their services within two or three days. That compared to eight to 14 days under previous claiming methods.

She said another major benefit of online claiming was that practice staff could now perform an online patient verification (OPV) to confirm a person's Medicare details at the time of consultation.

'The OPV check is absolutely fantastic. It's probably one of the best facilities I think. You can check almost immediately if the Medicare details are up-to-date, which leads to fewer rejections,' Ms Tomkinson said.

And fewer rejections meant less chasing up patients, fewer changes and a smoother, more streamlined administration process.

'We couldn't do without it. It just runs so smoothly and obviously we don't have that many rejections anymore and everything's pretty much done through the system,' Ms Tomkinson said.

'It's just so much simpler.'

Because Derwent Valley Medical Centre primarily bulk bills, it did not introduce the online private patient claiming facility until recently.

Ms Tomkinson said the patients thought online claiming was great.

'They're very impressed because we don't have a Medicare office here. The closest is about 28 kilometres away, so it's certainly much more convenient for people who don't often go into Hobart. They can now get a cheque sent to them or have the money deposited straight into their nominated bank account,' she said.

When setting up the practice to use online claiming, which also includes Department of Veterans' Affairs claiming and notifications to the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register, Ms Tomkinson said there was very little training required.

She said staff from Medicare Australia directed her to a website where she could download full instructions for using the system.

'We had a settling in period of about six weeks but since then it's been easy,' she said.

In summing up the online claiming services provided by Medicare Australia, Ms Tomkinson said the main benefits were the quicker turnaround for payments, it was more secure and the up-to-date information about each patient was always right at your fingertips.

'And because everything's done through the system, there's far less paperwork to be sent in,' she said.

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