

# Doing business online

## More choice for patients with online claiming

At Shearwater Medical Centre, north of Devonport in Tasmania, doctors are providing even more choice and flexibility to their patients through using online claiming.

Practice coordinator Susan Martin said locals were given the option of paying the gap and then forwarding their Medicare cheque when it arrived.

‘Basically we get people, if they live locally, to pay the gap on the day and then bring in the cheque so they’re not out of pocket by any extra,’ she said.

Ms Martin said the decision to switch to Medicare Australia’s online claiming was made easier by the fact the practice principal was ‘right into technology’ and quick to embrace anything new.

In total, more than 4000 practices around the country have now taken up online claiming.

In addition to benefits available for patients, Ms Martin said online claiming was also great for practices.

She liked being able to verify a patient’s details in advance by using the online patient verification (OPV) check.

‘If something’s not right with a patient’s Medicare number, we’ve got the OPV check which tells us straight away if the number’s not correct,’ she said.

Ms Martin said because online claiming dispensed with the need for practices to send paperwork into Medicare, there were also significant stationery and postage savings.

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She said online claiming had also made a difference to the practice’s cash flow not only because bulk bill payments now came back much faster, but also because more patients were choosing to pay up front.

‘Even Department of Veterans’ Affairs payments are coming back much quicker,’ she said.

‘It’s made a real difference to the doctors’ cash flow which means you can plan a bit better and you’re not waiting for payment to come in and putting off whatever you might be wanting to do, which keeps debt to a minimum,’ she said.

Ms Martin said so far, she couldn’t fault the new online claiming services and wondered why all practices hadn’t made the move.

She said online claiming was accurate, secure and convenient.

‘It’s a really good thing to have and I’m sure all practices would benefit from it, especially, I would say, a larger practice.

‘We’re a small family practice in comparison but I know of larger practices that haven’t even got onto Medicare Australia’s online claiming yet and I’m a bit surprised by that because it just cuts your overheads immensely,’ she said.

