

Doing business online

See your doctor and Medicare at the same time

Patients at Flemington in suburban Melbourne are now able to do business with Medicare without even leaving their doctor's office.

That's because Flemington Medical Centre is one of 4000 health care providers nationwide now offering convenient online claiming.

Practice manager Angela Dellemijn said they started using Medicare Australia's online claiming to not only assist their private patients but also to streamline their own claims.

'We wanted to make things easier for ourselves and our patients, so that's why we decided to change to online claiming,' she said.

Miss Dellemijn said the practice specialised in helping patients with drug and alcohol related problems and also had a high number of elderly patients.

'We bulk bill all of our pension and concession card holders and so it's important to us that we can get paid for those consultations as quickly as possible,' Miss Dellemijn said.

Doctors who use online claiming now receive payment in as little as two days, compared to eight or 14 days under previous claiming methods.

For bulk billed patients, a visit to a doctor who uses online claiming is almost the same.

However, patients who pay for their consultation in full can now choose to have their Medicare benefit paid either into a nominated bank account by electronic funds transfer or by cheque through the mail.

All they have to do is take their bank account number to the doctor's office and provide it to the receptionist following their consultation.

Miss Dellemijn said the patients thought online claiming was 'absolutely wonderful'.

For those who worked during normal business hours particularly, not having to visit the Medicare office during their lunch break was a real relief.

'Some people do still prefer to go to Medicare and get their money back then and there, but most really like being able to lodge their claim from here,' she said.

Miss Dellemijn said a computerised office in conjunction with online claiming offered by Medicare Australia had reduced the doctor's administrative workload.

'Usually the patient would sign the bulk bill slip in with the doctor but we're all computerised now so the doctor sends me an electronic message and lets me know the type of consultation and I print up a voucher for the patient to sign on their way out.

'The doctor thinks it's wonderful, because there's less to do,' she said.

'It's the same with the Australian Childhood Immunisation Register. Instead of having to fill in forms and send them away, we just check a few boxes on the computer and transmit the details online.'

She said using online claiming meant she didn't have to keep reams of paperwork around the office.

'It's a lot easier because I don't have to worry about drawers and drawers of Medicare vouchers and we don't have to worry about banking because it goes straight into the account,' she said.

In summing up the practice's change to online claiming and how it had affected both the staff and the patients, Miss Dellemijn said it really did make life a lot easier.

'It's fantastic, we should have done it ages ago,' she said.

