

# Doing business online

## Australia's largest diagnostic imaging network rolls out online claiming

Health care providers uneasy about changing to online claiming need look no further for reassurance than Australia's largest network of diagnostic imaging providers, the I-Med/MIA Network.

With some 250 clinics throughout Australia, I-Med/MIA has been progressively rolling out Medicare Australia's online claiming since 2004.

IT manager for Victoria Julian Gully said they began the mammoth program to install Medicare Australia's online claiming at their South Australian and Victorian clinics because they saw the previous claim system, Medclaims, as an old and outdated program.

'We started with South Australia about six to 12 months ago as a bit of a test database to see how Medicare Australia was able to handle it. We had some doubts about whether Medicare Australia's technology could cope with the amount of data, however the South Australia trial went well so we decided to proceed with Victoria,' Mr Gully said.

In making the decision to upgrade to online claiming Mr Gully said I-Med/MIA saw efficiencies would be achieved in their back office operations. 'We had five staff dedicated to processing Medclaims,' he said, 'and now those staff are available for debt collection and other areas.'

He said despite the size of the program, by working with their software vendor and the team from Medicare Australia to develop a plan he was pleased to report that the rollout had gone smoothly.

In Victoria, even the massive job of arranging registrations for each doctor was handled well by I-Med/MIA and Medicare Australia staff.

'The big change for us was in the registrations,' Mr Gully said. 'All 105 of our doctors had to be registered and because all our doctors rotated around 50 practices that was essentially five-and-a-half thousand registrations.'

Registration for Medicare Australia's online claiming is necessary to ensure each doctor is covered by a security certificate, used to encrypt data for transfer via the internet.

Mr Gully said there was a degree of staff training required at the front end of their operation but that was made easier with the help of an in-house trainer.

'The practice chiefs out in the clinics picked it up quite quickly, with only two to three hours training,' he said.

'We had a couple of doctors who were fearful of the change but we're really happy with the way things are going.'

Mr Gully said although patients appreciated the convenience of being able to process their Medicare claim on-site, a lot were very wary about handing over their bank account details.

Under online claiming, patients who pay for their consultation in full have three options. They can either take away an account and claim the rebate from Medicare, request a cheque be sent to them or have the rebate paid directly into a nominated bank account.

'They are a little bit wary at the moment and most will be happy to wait for the cheque,' Mr Gully said.

Despite this hesitation, he said Medicare Australia's online claiming had provided more incentives and a larger number of patients now paid in full.

Mr Gully said he was extremely pleased with the way online claiming was working across the I-Med/MIA Network.

