

# Doing business online

## Online claiming an administrative godsend

At Warrnambool in Victoria, the practice manager in charge of 10 GPs and numerous visiting registrars has hailed as an administrative godsend Medicare Australia's new system of online medical claiming.

Terry Cronin from Warrnambool Medical Clinic said he was keen to switch to online claiming when he learnt that it could streamline office procedures and result in faster payments from Medicare.

'We were one of the first to take it up once our software provider made it available,' he said.

'We already had broadband so it was only a matter of making a small adjustment to the software on the computers at the counter and a couple in the accounts area,' he said.

Mr Cronin described the set-up process and use of the desktop system as quite straightforward.

'Everything's working very efficiently and solidly and there's never been a problem as far as the actual computer side of it goes.'

For bulk bill claims particularly, Medicare Australia's online claiming had been worth the investment. Warrnambool Medical Clinic uses the system to electronically batch and transmit its bulk bill claims twice a week or as required.

'Administratively it's been a bit of a godsend really; the money's paid much quicker. We're paid within two days of submitting a claim, so it has improved the cash flow dramatically.'

Looking to private patients, Mr Cronin said many still preferred to take a voucher to Medicare for payment, however an increasing number were opting to have their claim processed while they waited and receive a cheque in the mail.

'They just take it for granted really that that service is provided. We never made them go to Medicare anyway; we always collected people's claim forms for them and delivered them to the Medicare office. So I think they see this as just being part of an efficient practice.'

He said for private patients who did not pay in full at the time of consultation, chasing up Medicare cheques had always been an issue because many forgot to lodge the claim or forward the cheque on.

'I think there's less non-payment of Medicare cheques now, but we would still prefer for people to pay the account in full,' he said.

With Medicare Australia's online claiming, patients can now settle their account with a credit card and have their rebate paid directly to a nominated bank account, meaning they don't have to be out of pocket.

'If Medicare Australia's online claiming leads to automatic lodgement and payment of all Medicare benefits direct to the practice then that's probably the ideal,' he said.

'It's good, it's encouraging and we just hope that it goes that next step really.'

---

***'Administratively it's been a bit of a godsend really; the money's paid much quicker. We're paid within two days of submitting a claim, so it has improved the cash flow dramatically.'***

