

Doing business online

Online claiming saves new businesses

A steady cash flow is important to a new business, which is why Angelo Street Optical in Western Australia uses Medicare Australia's online claiming system.

Co-owner Barry Telfer said his six-month-old South Perth business receives payments from Medicare quickly thanks to the system. For a business that bulk bills all of its customers for eye examinations, this speed in payment is a necessity.

"With Medicare Australia's online claiming we get our money much sooner. For a new business especially, cash flow is very important, and processing the claims in a short period of time means the money is in the bank in next to no time," he said.

Medicare Australia's online claiming system, which was introduced in 2002, also saves Angelo Street Optical time and expense when lodging claims because it eliminates much of the paperwork and postage costs.

"I've come from larger optical groups where the billing process is very cumbersome compared to this. It has meant going from manually sorting through vouchers to working online, where a couple of keystrokes will print out the Medicare voucher for the client to sign," Mr Telfer said.

Medicare Australia's online claiming system is an improvement on the previous online claiming system, Medclaims, which was limited to bulk billing and involved extensive record keeping.

Mr Telfer described Medicare Australia's online claiming system as "very easy and straight-forward". Lodging a bulk bill claim is as simple as using a stored patient record to create a voucher, printing an assignment of benefit form for the patient to sign, and using the online software to lodge the claim.

While Angelo Street Optical lodges its claims every few weeks, claims of up to 80 vouchers can be lodged as often as needed.

Mr Telfer said managing rejected claims has also become easier with Medicare Australia's online claiming system. If details are incorrect or incomplete when submitting a claim, Medicare Australia sends him a message outlining the problem. Likewise, if a submitted claim is rejected it will be returned for correction and resubmission. This speed in notification saves on delays in payment.

He says installing the system posed no technical problems for Angelo Street Optical. The system is built into compatible practice management software.

"The benefits of being a new business is that everything we have is new. We had dedicated optical software as our main operating system, which links to the online claiming system, so it was pretty straight forward," Mr Telfer said.

He said staff at Medicare Australia had been willing and able to provide support when it was needed.

"Certainly we've had situations where we've needed to put other optometrists on the system—locums—and the people at Medicare have been very helpful and friendly," he said.

Angelo Street Optical has joined 400 optometrists and more than 5000 medical practices Australia-wide in using Medicare Australia's online claiming.

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