

Senators, as a rural specialist and a member of the medical staff group of Mildura Base hospital I would like to inform you of some of the problems with the schemes of NSW and VIC.

1. The claims need to be made within a 6/12 period and women who are pregnant and travelling to see their obstetrician and deliver in a base hospital have to submit 2 applications.
2. There is difficulty with the NSW form as it only relates to one visit so each visit needs a new form with a visit to the referring practitioner for each form.
3. Sometimes the nearest specialist service may not be the most appropriate e.g. there are radiation oncology facilities in Bendigo but they do not have a complete service. This involves the referring doctor in further paperwork for the patient to get to the appropriate place.
4. The GPs have mentioned that often their referral to a centre for a MRI is answered by "you have radiologists in Mildura so it can be done there". We do have radiologists but no MRI.
5. One of our physicians runs chemotherapy in consultation with medical oncology units in the capital cities. He is considered by VPTAS to be a medical oncologist and so there is further correspondence with the bureaucrats.
6. Patients being treated for lymphomas etc, will need to be referred to an appropriate centre and whether it is Adelaide or Melbourne may be determined by the support the patient has in the town: e.g. a patient may need special treatment over a long period of time and have relatives in either Melbourne or Sydney where they can stay instead of going to Adelaide.
7. While we have an ENT surgeon in town, he is a general ENT surgeon and is not willing to do some of the complicated surgery offered in capital cities. Again, the GP needs to write a letter to explain the situation.
8. Often the patient is told they are not eligible for assistance and to go and see their doctor.
9. From the above, you can see why referring doctors feel that they are not being trusted to decide where the patient is going to get the best treatment.
10. There needs to be some flexibility in the mileage required as in Mildura there are several places that are say (\* km from here but the patient may live just out of town and there is no nearer medical practitioners.

I hope this has been helpful. I would be happy to discuss it further if needed.

Ian Pettigrew  
A/Prof Rural Obstetrics and Gynaecology,  
Mildura Rural Clinical School,  
Monash University.