

Dr JAMES SUNG

Dental Surgeon BDS (Syd Uni)

12/4/2012

Dear Australian Senate

I am a general dentist practising in NSW with 22 years of professional experience. Throughout that time I have come across government dental schemes such as Veterans Affairs and other schemes that were supporting Australian citizens.

Since the inception of the Medicare Chronic Disease Dental Scheme, I reluctantly allowed my patients to receive treatments under the scheme because the average fees were much less than the private fees. However I realised that many of senior citizens who do not have private incomes would benefit from such scheme as they would not have to pay anything out of their pockets and have started participating since.

I remember initially that there were not many dentists who participated in this scheme to an extent that even local newspaper reported on this topic. The dentists were given basic rules guiding this scheme by mail as to what is allowed and how to claim and one followed these guidelines.

Average dentist would not have time to follow constantly about the Medicare's administrative claiming policy which apparently they later posted in their web-site and because these were not exclusively mentioned at the initial stages of the introduction to the scheme, it is understandable that many fell to the "traps" of not adhering to their now revised rules.

I believe dentists as a whole are one of the most respected and trusted professionals in the community but ironically it is also one which is at the same time dreaded most because of perceived potential pain or fear of the unknown. The current Medicare audit aiming at policing the scheme and the subsequent penalties imposed to the number of the dentists are not only unfair but also harsh as well. Instead of claiming back the money which apparently were due to gaps in administrative steps Medicare should spend more efforts to educate the dentists about the scheme requirements.

Medicare's stance about the penalty is defaming the profession as a whole unnecessarily.

Dentists are not like medical doctors in that we are not use to claim anything from Medicare and Medicare should do more to let the dentists know about the policy.

Due to the recent events that has affected few of my colleagues, will be reconsidering whether I will participate in Medicare benefits in the future. I thank you for your time in reading this submission and should you require any further details in this matter please do not hesitate to contact me. Thank you.

Yours sincerely

Dr James Sung