

From: Dr Alexander Vouliotis

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Senate Finance & Public Administration Committee
PO Box 6100
Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600
AUSTRALIA

Dear Committee Members

I participated in the scheme because patients from my Clinic or their friends were making appointments to see me (the Dentist) and were showing me a form which said that they were entitled to \$4200 for Dental treatment from Medicare. I run a small business like all Dentist do, if I refused to treat them they would go elsewhere along with other family members and friends; it could mean the end of my Business.

I received no information from either the referring practitioner or Medicare about the scheme. Absolutely nothing and nothing from the Doctors that were giving the Medicare forms to the patients. There was nothing written on the form to indicate or direct a Dentist to compliance requirement

Medicare however did send by registered mail a notification that they were going to do an Audit, very late in the scheme, and went out of their way to phone me at the Prison where I work during the day. This is a very important point, if Medicare had a compliance requirement with fatal consequences they should have made sure that the Dentists were fully aware of this prior to them treating any Medicare patient.

My only other experience with a Medicare based scheme is the simple TEEN DENTAL SCHEME. I am not a preferred provider to any fund.

I do not participate in the Veterans affairs scheme (I do not have patients) ,but I did a long time ago, it operated differently, it is better than the Medicare scheme. They provide forms for the Dentist to complete and the patient to sign and submit for payment

I have spoken to various Doctors ,they told me that they were confused, because many times in the past the scheme was planned to terminate, they were not interested in any itemized information or any form of treatment planning because they did not understand Dentistry but I was reassured many times by them that the patients they gave the forms for \$4200 were genuine .I work in the Prisons from 8am till 5 pm, I arrive in my Surgery 5.30 pm and work up to 10pm,the Medicare offices are closed at that time, most Doctors have gone home. I have tried to contact Medicare by phone, all that I got was an answering service

I am in the middle of an Audit, waste of time, done too late at the wrong time. I am aware of many Dentists who are being audited. I have not been advised that benefits were incorrectly claimed and I am 100% certain that I did not get involved in anything like that.

Yes the majority of my patients in the area which I practice are financially well off and could afford to pay without Medicare money. My fee policy in my clinic is given to all Patients (FEES FOR DENTAL TREATMENT MUST BE PAID AT THE END OF EACH VISIT) and this is my fee policy. My patients were very happy with my work and the treatment which I provided and with the money which they subsequently got back from Medicare.

The Medicare requirements are not practical for the following reasons

- a) The GPs are not judges for dental treatment unless they have DENTAL qualifications, not a single GP that gave Medicare forms to my patients was interested in the itemized summary. Dental treatment was a matter between Dentist and patient.
- b) I do not sell dental items, I provide dental treatment and in most cases I cannot give an itemized number before treatment. I give an estimate of the cost which my patients understand. When the procedure is complete than I can give a final item number and fee. I have been working like this since I graduated in 1977 and will remain like this until the day I die.

No Medicare Auditor attended my practice and I have not received any educational or any such material apart from two registered letters about the proposed Audit and one phone call from a Compliance officer from Medicare at the Metropolitan Remand Centre where I work. The most unfortunate thing about this conversation that I had with him was that he made up and signed an incorrect statement.

I cannot live and work like this, it needs to come to an end sooner rather than later, hopefully with all smiling. Medicare needs to change path, they introduced a scheme which was poorly planned and planned to fail. An escape route by blaming the Dentists will not work; Medicare needs to recognize the great work which all Dentists have done and doing, to listen and learn from Dentist and to avoid the errors which have created this mess.

Kind regards

Dr Alex Vouliotis