



Dr John Hatzis

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Senate Finance & Public Administration Committees
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Parliament House
CANBERRA ACT 2600

Dear Senate

I am a dentist practicing in a south eastern suburb in Melbourne. I have been working for 22 years. From time to time we do some Veteran affairs work which are set at fees/rates lower than our normal private practice fees.

Veterans Affairs work has always been enjoyable. The simple and easy administration of it was taught to me by my previous dentist employer and it was easy to follow. If a patient has a dental problem /pain you fix it then and their and the patient took a copy of what they have done with an itemized and costed description. You are able to help them then and there when they need it and they were appreciative.

My first exposure to the Chronic Dental Disease Scheme (CDDS) was through my own patients bringing in forms saying please sign this form for my doctor so I can be seen here under this new scheme where I have \$4,250 of free treatment.

I assumed that this CDDS was designed to be a community gesture to sick individuals that we should help. So if my existing patients are being provided with this and the doctors are saying yes it is ok then we accept to see patients under this new scheme. Doctors and patients have been grateful that we have helped lots of patients.

Our focus is to provide a high standard of dental care to all our patients. Our receptionist/nurses and assistant dentists have all received inconsistent information from Medicare staff and GP staff about protocol, how to see patients, when to see them, when they are entitled, what they are entitled to and what administration work is involved.

Medicare should have provided information either through a DVD or seminars or popped into dentist's clinics at the beginning to help explain the CDDS scheme to dentists/receptionists in groups. The scheme personally has been draining. Our receptionists have been inundated with having to learn the scheme, to correct mistakes of GP staff and patients and to deal with "red-tape" complaints that should have been addressed by the referring GP staff or Medicare staff. Each patient who received this Grant should have been educated on how to utilize it. Medicare did not inform the patients in detail about their entitlements.

Whilst the patients have in the clinic received the necessary dental treatment and received the benefit of healthier teeth to chew with they cannot imagine the huge paperwork and administrative strain it has put on the dentist and his staff. Taking into consideration that we at our dental clinic participated in this CDDS scheme as a favour to our patients it has been to a significant discounted fee to our normal fees hence with markedly less "profit".

We expected to have a minor number of patients that would utilize this scheme like we have with our Veterans Affairs scheme. We did not expect such a huge influx of CDDS patients. We were not prepared for it. Medicare did not warn or prepare us for this huge administration load and given the opportunity to enter into such a scheme again as poorly organized as this I would prefer to refrain from participating for the sake of mine and my staff's work place happiness.

I have spoken to colleagues that are being audited by Medicare to see whether they have met these paperwork requirements. These colleagues have provided good dental treatment to their patients. They are stressed because if Medicare feels the paperwork is not to Medicare's satisfaction they will be asked to pay back the money for discounted fees they received from Medicare for doing necessary dental work that their patients were grateful for.

The CDDS required far more education to all dentists in Australia. This could have been done through conferences, dvds or having Medicare representatives going to all dental clinics explaining the requirements /protocol to staff. All the patients should have been better informed and it should have adopted a similar set up as Veterans Affairs because dentists already know how that works.

In this instance we need to be educated and steps like recovery should not be sought as this can directly impact on the livelihoods of so many people.

Yours Faithfully

Dr John Hatzis