

To: Committee, FPA (SEN)
Subject: Medicare Chronic Disease Dental Scheme

Dear Committee

I've been a dentist in _____ for nearly 30 years. My philosophy has always been to do the right thing for my patients, my staff & my business. I now employ 14 staff in a very busy practice. We have always provided dental treatment for our Veterans Affairs patients & for pensioners & the unemployed through the PDS & GDS Schemes, & have never had a problem until now.

When the Medicare Scheme was introduced I had an associate working with me, Dr _____. He has recently been audited & it is my understanding that he was sometimes "non compliant" in performing the necessary paperwork. His dentistry under the Scheme is not in question - in fact it was of a very high standard. It appears, however, he didn't always provide the appropriate treatment plan to the patient or their GP. While I feel I am ultimately responsible for everything that happens in my practice I can't oversee every detail, & had I been aware of his oversight of course I could have taken steps to address it. I can say in his defence that this scheme appears to have been established with random eligibility criteria (we see a massive variation between different GP's, even within the same practice), & with random reporting criteria (why do GP's need to know details of the patient's treatment plan but Medicare doesn't ?).

I have been advised that he may have to repay a significant amount of the funding he claimed between 2009 & 2010 , despite the fact that there are laboratory fees involved (possibly up to 20%) & as far as I know the quality of his treatment is not in question. What is even more unfair is that, despite the fact that my involvement here is secondary, I might end up with an even greater penalty than Dr _____. He was paid about 40% commission during his time with me, so he would assume that I am responsible for 60% of his penalty. Of course I've had to pay for staff wages & stock (etc , etc) so if this was to occur the penalty in no way befits the supposed "crime" & I will have been dealt with unfairly.

I understand this scheme has been more expensive than the government had expected, & that Medicare have tried to reduce costs. It now appears that they have been instructed to recover some of these claims in a manner which is unjust. As dentists we support our community by being involved in government schemes (at significantly reduced fees) then become the scapegoat for one which was ill-conceived in the first place. I hope you can rectify this.

Yours sincerely

Dr Andrew Murray