

## RE: SENATE ENQUIRY MEDICARE SCHEME

These are some of the flaws and difficulties we have experienced with the current EPCC.

- No training was provided by medicare prior to the scheme.
- There were lot of errors in the administration.
- Our staff spent many hours into the paperwork because we do not get any information which clearly explains to us how to process the paperwork properly so that mistakes can be avoided.
- Some medicare staff were not helpful nor friendly.
- Earlier into the scheme about 3yrs ago, work was carried out and completed but was not paid for (\$3,800.00 aprox). This was due to the referral medical GP not submitting paper work to medicare but had given the patient the referral letter to go to our dentist.
- When we rang to talk to medicare staff regarding a problem, half of the times, we spoke to some medicare staff did not know what they were talking about. Some even advised us to do the wrong thing. It was lucky that we asked to speak to a supervisor that we could confirm that the advice we had received was wrong.
- In many cases, the treatment plan is just that, "a plan" and there can be deviations from it. (eg, planned to do a 2 surface adhesive filling but after caries removal, it turns into 3 surface cavity)
- Many medicare patients abuse the system. They make appointments and do not turn up for their appointments or cancel the appoint last minute and they do that many times. When we send them letter saying that we are not seeing them again, they get angry and abuse our receptionist. Also, there is no item number for '**fail to attend appointments**' under this medicare scheme, so, we cannot charge them, and it is very unfair for us as we still have to pay our staff and do not generate an income and other paients who want appointments but cannot get in because those unreliable patients have already taken some of the appointments which they do not attend.

- In quite a few cases, we were not satisfied with medicare explanations of why we did not get some payments for our services. They gave us an address to send letters for investigation. We did but never received a single response. Extremely disappointed!
- In some other cases, when we rang to ask why we did not receive some payments, they told us that they had paid us. We said, “but we did not receive a cheque” , that medicare staff answered, “ you must have”, we then said, “ I know that I did not receive the cheque” . They could not tell us which address they sent the cheque to and how much the amount and when they sent the cheque. And again, they gave us an address to send a letter for investigation. We did but never received a single response.
- We know that medicare scheme does not pay as much as our fee and on top we have to do extra administration work that we would not have to do if the patients were private patients, but we still try to provide the services to these patients. In return, we did not get any payments in many cases just because medicare does not explain clearly enough how the system work and how to avoid not getting paid. No wonder less and less dentists provide these services now.
- The automatic claiming system cannot recognise whether each item number can be claimed when multiple items are sent for claiming automatically.

For example, if the first item number is declined for claim for a correct reason, the following items will not be claimed even though they should be able to being claimed.

As a result, the whole claiming process is declined.

But if now, we try again: we leave the first item out and claim the rest of the items, they all will go through without problems.

Many thanks for introducing this bill to the Senate.

Regards,

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 Dr Michelle Truong  
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