

The dentist at
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Senate Finance and Public
Administration Committees
Parliament House
Canberra ACT 2600
Australia

Re: Submission regarding the Chronic Disease Dental Scheme (CCDS)

I am a practicing dentist in . I have been treating Medicare patients under the CDDS scheme since 2008. I accidentally became aware of this scheme from a colleague who had been treating patients under this scheme for almost one year. Our staff rang up Medicare and enquired about the scheme. I decided to register in order to become a provider. From the beginning it seemed difficult to integrate. Initially, we claimed manually which was an administrative nightmare, and then we were able to claim through an electronic terminal manually. Information would then have to be reentered back into the computer to try and have some interpreted record, but then we found out that we had to check online via special access whether the payments had been approved or not. It seemed like a process of feel and learns as you go and was quite cumbersome.

From speaking to Medicare we knew we had to have a valid referral from the patients' GP. We then always rang up Medicare and confirmed the patients plan was in place and approved before treatment commenced as we quickly found out that a referral was not necessarily approved. Finally our dental software supporter integrated the special dental Medicare item number codes into our program in 2011 which facilitated things and allowed integrating patient's records, accounts, appointments, treatment and claims together.

My modality for treating patients under the CDDS scheme has up until recently been:

1. Valid referral from PG
2. Confirmation of approval of referral plan with Medicare
3. Examination of patient and x-rays, working out with the patient their wants, letting them know their needs, working out a treatment plan, schedule of appointments and time frame for

treatment. Treatment is sometimes commenced here as many patients have a burning desire to move forwards or have a nagging problem needing relief.

4. Scheduling a series of appointments
5. Progression of treatment and claiming

I have been reading and hearing of horror stories and panicking myself. If something is so important why wouldn't Medicare go out of its way to let dentists know the heavy penalties they will be liable for over administration oversights?

A mandatory attendance at an information session would save a great deal of heart ache and money. When one approaches a speed camera whilst driving signs appear saying "Speed camera's used in areas" then "Speed cameras ahead" and then "Speed cameras, heavy fines, loss of license".

An article in the December 11 /January 12 issue of 'Bite' dental magazine over Medicare CDDS and the minister for human services Tania Plibersek's response to the issue of the paperwork shows total non-apathy and evidence of the governments need to distinguish between incomplete paperwork and fraudulent dental activities trying to take advantage of the scheme. In the Medicare case it seems very little information was out there, Medicare had very little interest in getting this information across to dentists. According to the dental council the Australian Dental Association started actively trying to inform and educate dentists on the gravity of not complying with the paperwork around one year ago. The only registered mail I have received from Medicare is the one informing me of my Audit. Surely if Medicare knew of this problem early on, they would have taken on the educator role rather than taking out the boxing gloves.

The issue for Medicare is to remember that some of these honest dentists have spent hours and hours of hard work trying to help people in need under this scheme and they should be acknowledged rather than punished for these services if they have been misinformed about the proper Medicare paperwork procedure. We need to confirm that we are living in a democratic, just society not in a third world country.

Kind Regards,

Dr David Issa