

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

SIMPLY
ORTHODONTICS™

5th April 2012

To whom it may concern

RE: Medicare Chronic Disease Dental Scheme

As you are aware, Medicare has been auditing dentists who have used the Chronic Health Dental Scheme to treat patients. Of concern is the way Medicare has undertaken the audits and the aggressive way it seems to be pursuing reimbursement for what are often minor administrative errors. What started out as a checking process for large-claiming dentists is now encompassing any dentist who has used the scheme.

The vast majority of patients treated under the scheme have been done so in an honest fashion by the treating dentist. Unfortunately numerous dentists, who have provided excellent treatment to grateful patients are being targeted. In some cases, Medicare is demanding 100% of claims to be repaid, based on the sole reason of an administration error. This seems extremely harsh, and a complete over-reaction by the Department.

In my specific case, I operate an orthodontic practice and have used the scheme for approximately 10 patients. I am currently being audited by Medicare for 8 of those patients. We have been as compliant as far as we knew, during the time of using the scheme, but due to some confusing definitions and instructions from Medicare it seems we have not been fully compliant in every aspect with 2 paperwork requirements. Over the past couple of years, we have on numerous occasions tried to clarify certain areas with Medicare, and have been given conflicting advice on many occasions. It seems that not even the employees of Medicare understand the rules related to the scheme. It is little wonder nobody else does either!!! At this stage we have not heard back from Medicare regarding the audit, although we submitted all the information they requested approximately 3 months ago.

Since being audited, our practice has made a decision to refuse to treat any new patients who are referred through the scheme, as it is not worth the time or stress of dealing with Medicare. This is very unfortunate, as one of our practices is located in country Victoria and we are the only orthodontist in the area. Thus, any patient referred through the scheme has to either pay for it themselves or travel extensively to another practice that does treat under the scheme.

Under the circumstances I would urge any dentist or dental specialist not to treat patients under the scheme, due to the aggressiveness of Medicare and their audit process. Unfortunately, the only losers are the general public and dental health in Australia.

Thank you for your support in this area. Any assistance you are able to give to dentists in relation to Medicare's auditing process would be most appreciated.

Kind regards

Jonathan Skilton
Specialist Orthodontist

Simply Orthodontics
ABN 38 442 934 931
PO Box 2244
Taylors Lakes Victoria 3038
www.simplyorthodontics.com.au
info@simplyorthodontics.com.au

Sydenham
15 Overton Lea Boulevard
Sydenham Victoria 3037
Telephone (03) 9390 8742
Facsimile (03) 9390 6160

Horsham
6 Robinson Street
Horsham Victoria 3400
Telephone (03) 5381 2536

