

10th April,2010

Dear Honourable Members of the Senate,

Thank you very much for the opportunity to express my concerns as a member of the dental profession about the actions of Medicare under the Chronic Disease Dental Scheme (the Scheme).

I have been working as a dentist at in the state of for 28 years. The City of is frequently classified as an area with high unemployment and low socio-economical status. The introduction of the Scheme was welcomed by the citizens of Liverpool and proved to be extremely popular.

At the beginning of the Scheme, I received a booklet named "Medicare Benefits Schedule, Dental Service" explaining how the Scheme works. The booklet was concise, and despite the efforts of ours and those from the staffs of Provider Enquiry Line, it took close to five weeks before we managed to make everything right for the purpose of claiming benefits. The Provider Enquiry Line didn't have the ability to answer clinical queries, and often we were confused with the kinds of treatment and their costs that we could provide to the patients. The Scheme works very differently to the one operates by the Department of Veteran Affairs, and that by the NSW Health. The two latter services have been working successfully for a long time, providing free dental treatments to the veterans and the disadvantaged.

Our surgery was selected for random audit on the 6-6-11 under the Scheme. We voluntarily provide all the documents and reports that were asked of us, only to realise from the auditor () that Medicare was not interested in the dental treatments we have provided to our patients but was auditing the dates of our reports to the referring doctors. Ms also explained to me that if the reports were on the day of the patient's second appointment, they were deemed non-compliant. The letter had to be dated prior to the second appointment but not on or after that date. Ms could not give us the reason to why this was so important. This was the first time I was made aware of the importance of the dates on the letters.

I am currently under a full audit for non-compliant. I am of no uncertainty that the Scheme is of great benefit to a lot of people, without which they would not have been able to afford. The mistakes we made were unintentional and were of no bearing on the dental treatment we had to provide. We sincerely regret for our lack of attention in this matter. It is my understanding that Medicare is demanding full refunds for non-compliance. This action has placed a lot of stress on me emotionally. I would not have thought that my inattention to the compliance dates deserve such draconian forms of punishment.

Thank you again for this opportunity.

Ray Cheng