



**6 July 2009**

## **ELECTRONIC CLAIMING GETS GOING IN CENTRAL COAST**

Central Coast health care professionals have thrown their support behind claiming Medicare rebates electronically at practices, following a local information session organised by Medicare Australia.

As a result, more patients in the Central Coast area will soon be able to claim their Medicare rebate at their local medical practice.

In the last month alone, more than 7,500 services were made electronically in the Central Coast area with an additional 372 practices now offering electronic claiming since this time last year.

According to Linda Soo from Medicare Australia, there was a high level of interest from Central Coast health practitioners about electronic claiming.

“Interest in regional New South Wales has been particularly good. They seem to be open to change,” Ms Soo said.

“Medicare offices may not be as close for people in regional NSW so regional practices, such as those in the Central Coast area, are looking for other avenues to help their patients claim their Medicare rebate. They understand that it’s hard for some people to get to their local Medicare office.

“Feedback from practice managers who attended the local information session has been positive. Most of them have since said they felt electronic claiming would be ‘very effective’ in their practice.”

Medicare Australia is currently encouraging more medical practices across Australia to implement electronic claiming.

Since mid last year, over 1,200 additional practices in New South Wales are now offering electronic claiming to paying patients. During the last month, over 230,000 electronic claims have been processed in NSW and just over 1 million nationally.

A number of practices in the Central Coast area are already using electronic claiming.

Gina Bond, Office Manager at Invitation to Health in North Gosford, has noticed more patients choosing to claim their Medicare rebate electronically in recent months. Ms Bond attended the Central Coast information session to learn more about electronic claiming.

“We’ve been using electronic claiming since the beginning of May. We upgraded our software recently and that allowed us to start using electronic claiming. We wanted to keep up to date with electronic resources and we wanted to utilise electronic claiming,” Ms Bond said.

“It’s been well-received by our patients. They pay over the counter so electronic claiming suits our demographic – it streamlines things for them and they find it convenient.

“Our philosophy is about giving our patients choices. They can use electronic claiming or they can take their bill to a Medicare office to claim their rebate if they want to. It’s just about offering patients that choice.”

Ms Soo said that, as with other information events around the country, the Central Coast session had been about helping practices demystify and clear up any confusion they had about electronic claiming.

“I think the event helped people discuss electronic claiming with other practices that are already using it,” she said.

“Practices are asking for more information about how they can use it so we expect to see an increase in electronic claiming in regional NSW now.”

Patients in the Central Coast area who pay to see their GP can ask practice staff if they can claim their Medicare rebate electronically.

**ENDS**

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