

Welcome to the latest edition of Practice Pulse, the newsletter for Practice Managers and Practice Staff.

This edition includes the latest news from Medicare Australia regarding their support package to GPs for Medicare Online Claiming; and information on the new rebates for dental services.

With Christmas functions clearly marked on Practice calendars the following article from Kelli Porter covers some important risk management aspects that are sometimes overlooked.

Christmas 'Spirit' in the Workplace

There are always numerous things to consider when planning the staff Christmas party, and much of the planning is fun. There is the selection of the venue and menu, setting the time and date, the guest list, and what to wear!

However, a risk management approach should also be taken when planning Christmas parties, or other events that involve the consumption of alcohol. The employer has a duty of care to avoid exposing employees to unnecessary risk of injury or illness and to ensure that the risk of harm is removed. Employer duty to employees exists all year round, but is heightened during the Christmas holiday season when employees like to relax and let their hair down, and sometimes engage in behaviour they might not engage in at other times of the year.

The person responsible for organising a function where alcohol is served is accountable for ensuring that alcohol is served in a safe manner. Start by reminding employees of company policies, e.g. drug and alcohol, codes of conduct, sexual harassment. Look at the type of function being held and consider ways to reduce alcohol consumption. These can include provision of entertainment or activities during the event. Put a finishing time to the function, and do not provide anything that promotes continuation past the finish time e.g. leaving the bar tab open.

Ensure responsible consumption of alcohol by;

- Having non-alcoholic beverages visibly available in adequate variety and supply

- Presenting non-alcoholic drinks in as appealing a manner as beverages containing alcohol
- Providing low alcohol beverages
- Providing adequate quantities of fresh and interesting food
- Not serving alcohol more than 30 minutes before substantial food is served
- Avoiding high salt content foods that promote thirst
- Serving food in waves, to encourage frequent return trips back to the table, or have food served by walking around the room

The organisation should also have a Drug and Alcohol Policy in place. This policy should be consistently applied across all areas of the organisation and should include;

- Rationale
- Aims and objectives
- Scope, including social functions (this should also cover when alcohol will be permitted at work, under what circumstances and what the behavioural expectations of the staff are)
- Infringement of the policy
- Process for dealing with someone who is suspected of being impaired

And remember, the best Christmas parties are well planned and conducted safely. Enjoy your 2007 Christmas function and above all, have fun.



There was a new rule at the Christmas party - one drink per person!

SUPPORT FOR PRACTICES CHOOSING ELECTRONIC MEDICARE CLAIMING

The Medicare Australia claiming method your practice chooses can make a big impact on productivity, cash flow and patient service.

Recognising the different needs of medical practices, Medicare Australia is offering a choice of two electronic Medicare claiming options – the internet-based Medicare Online, and the EFTPOS-based Medicare Online.

Both systems can process bulk bill and patient claims, but there are some important differences between the two that practices should consider.

Whichever claiming channel you choose, Medicare Australia is offering a transitional support package for both Medicare Online and Medicare Easyclaim.

Key features of the package are:

- Open to GPs and specialists only (excluding pathology)
- Lump sum payment of \$750 for metropolitan practices, \$1000 for rural practices
- 18 cents for each bulk bill and patient claim transaction processed electronically between September 2007 and December 2009 (paid quarterly to practices via EFT; first payment in March 2008)
- Separate support for software vendors to help practices connect to online

More than 7,000 practices already use a form of electronic Medicare claiming for bulk bill, patient claims or both. In September 2007 alone, approximately 345,000 patients nationwide were saved a trip to a Medicare office by practices offering on-the-spot claiming.



Visit www.medicareaustralia.gov.au for more information on electronic claiming choices and the transitional support package.

Practices can also call their local Medicare Australia representative on 1800 700 199 or talk to their EFTPOS or software provider.

IMPORTANT CHANGES TO MEDCLAIMS

Medicare Australia has formalised its plans to gradually wind down one of its older claiming channels, Medclaims, by ceasing to admit any new practices from 1 October 2007.

The Medclaims system is expected to close completely in mid-2008, almost 16 years after it was introduced. Medicare Australia is contacting practices still using Medclaims to help them transition to newer electronic claiming channels that are more secure, more efficient and more flexible. The number of sites registered for Medclaims has dropped 30 percent over the past two years, with more than 1,100 practices switching from Medclaims to Medicare Online (previously known as HIC Online).

Medclaims will operate as normal for existing users until mid-2008. All other Medicare Australia claiming methods remain unchanged.

For more information call 1800 700 199
visit www.medicareaustralia.gov.au

CONGRATULATIONS

We wish to extend our congratulations to
FREMANTLE FAMILY DOCTORS
who has been awarded

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners' (RACGP) Western Australia General Practice of the Year Award for 2007

RACGP President Dr Vasantha Preetham congratulated the doctors and staff of Fremantle Family Doctors and thanked them for their outstanding service to both the general practice profession and their local community.

"We are always proud to celebrate the achievements of our profession. Fremantle Family Doctors is leading in the adoption of technology for record keeping, a green approach to managing their practice and in delivering a range of preventive care services to patients," said Dr Peter Maguire, Chair, RACGP Western Australia Faculty.

Highlights of the practice include:

- All practice doctors complete home and nursing home visits.
- The practice features a three bay treatment room, five consulting rooms, on site pathology and a dedicated children's playroom.
- Key health services on offer include spirometry, echocardiograms, cryotherapy, minor surgery, immunisations, implanon implants and dive medicals.

Again, our CONGRATULATIONS.

WORKCOVER WA

WorkCover is pleased to announce that the **first, progress** and **final compensation medical certificates** are now available in two formats on the WorkCover WA website;

- (1) Standard PDF—to print and complete by hand, *and*
- (2) Microsoft word—to complete and save electronically, and to print out.

To access the medical certificates on the website or for further information visit www.workcover.wa.gov.au

NEW MEDICARE DENTAL ITEMS

From 1 November 2007, new Medicare rebates will be available for dental services. Eligible patients will be able to receive up to \$4,250 in Medicare benefits for dental services over two consecutive calendar years. The new dental items—85011-87777 will replace the existing Enhanced Primary Care (EPC) dental items -10975-10977.

The new Medicare dental items will be available to people who have a chronic medical condition and complex care needs namely, people being managed under multidisciplinary care plans. A comprehensive range of dentals services will be covered.

GPs may wish to establish links with local dental practitioners and check whether dental practices will accept referrals under the new dental items from 1 November 2007.

RACGP 'PATIENT ALERT' POSTERS

This waiting room/treatment room poster is designed to raise awareness in patients about the importance of notifying practice staff if the potential for respiratory infection exists, so that staff can then take measures to prevent further transmission of respiratory infections.

To obtain copies of the poster for your practice please contact **Leanne Rich at RACGP on 03 8699 0419 or email leanne.rich@racgp.org.au**

AN INVITATION: JOIN RACGP AS A PRACTICE MANAGER AFFILIATE MEMBER

Practice Managers have an important role in patient safety, developing practice systems and ensuring the practice meets the requirements for standards and accreditation.

The affiliate membership package which the RACGP has designed for Practice Managers provides an extensive range of useful resources and services to support the Practice Manager role. As a key member of the general practice team, you are invited to join the RACGP as a practice manager affiliate member.

For further information visit www.racgp.org.au/membership/practicemanagers

Suzanne Velarde
Business Development and
Information Management

Medical Software and Vista

Please be aware when purchasing new PCs that many popular medical software packages are not Vista compatible. The final release of Vista has yet to be released which may explain why many software vendors have yet to seek compatibility. If you are considering buying new PCs please talk to your vendor about Vista compatibility and alternatives.

Electronic Discharge Summaries

Fremantle Hospital can now send discharge summaries electronically. If you would like to receive your summaries electronically you need to sign up with Healthlink, which ensures a secure messaging environment. You can contact Healthlink via the web at www.healthlink.net or by calling 1800 125 036.

Broadband for Health Incentive Payment Extended to December 31 2007

The financial incentive available to take up a qualified broadband service will continue until 31 December 2007. The incentives levels will continue at the current rate. Any new applicants and Eligible Practices whose contract is due for renewal on or before 31 December 2007 can renew their service for a further twelve months and claim the incentive applicable to their location.

IM @ GP Network

Fremantle GP Network can assist your practice with information management; therefore if you have training needs or questions about your software please contact me on 9319 0555 or email suzannev@frdgp.com.au. At this time we do not give IT support, however if you are having difficulties and do not have a regular provider we can assist you in your search.

PRACTICE PROFILE
REYNOLDS ROAD MEDICAL CENTRE
875 Canning Highway, Applecross 6153

Reynolds Road Medical Centre (RRMC) is a privately owned accredited practice, committed to providing quality health care in a caring, professional and friendly atmosphere. The Practice is open 7 days a week (closed Public Holidays) and employs 14 doctors.



The combined experience of the doctors ensures that an extensive range of services is available including; emergency medicine, family planning, seniors health, women's health, men's health, occupational health, travel medicine and medicals.

RRMC also offers a dedicated skin clinic providing removal of skin cancers, moles, cysts and lesions. There are regular sessions from a surgically trained general practitioner who offers eyelid reductions, sclerotherapy, wedge resections and other surgical interventions. A physiotherapist is also on site and pathology services are available adjoining the premises.



The doctors are complemented by 3 practice nurses who triage emergencies, assist with immunisations, dressings, medical assessments and a myriad of other duties associated with a busy practice. Ongoing clinical implementations include home health assessments and the set up of clinics e.g. diabetes and asthma.

In addition to her other responsibilities Rita, the practice manager, along with her 2IC, leads the staff of 10 receptionists and ensures that ongoing training is provided, regular staff meetings are held and RRMC remains a happy and safe workplace.



RRMC is active within FGPN, one well respected doctor, Dr Irene Fruzynski acts as the GP Advisor for Wellness and Workforce, she is a member of the GP Advisory Group and has coordinated and facilitated the Women's Small Learning Group. The RRMC nursing and reception staff attend FGPN education evenings.

If you would like your practice featured in the December edition of Practice Pulse please contact **Suzanne Badham** email sueb@frdgp.com.au or phone 9319 0555.

FGPN EDUCATION EVENTS—2008

The General Practice Development Team is in the process of organising the FGPN education events for Practice Managers, Practice Staff and Practice Nurses for 2008.

- We would appreciate your input to ensure that we are delivering education that meets your needs.

Please contact Kelli Porter, Suzanne Badham or Gae Sawyer on 9319 0555 with any requests or suggestions that you have.

FREMANTLE GP NETWORK EVENTS

24 October ASTHMA UPDATE

For further details please contact Jesse Pearse via jessep@frdgp.com.au or phone 9319 0555

27 October A FRESH APPROACH TO CHRONIC DISEASE MANAGEMENT

This workshop is directed at Practice Nurses, GPs and **Practice Staff** and will be held at Technology Park Function Centre, Saturday 8.45-4.00pm. For full details please see insert in this newsletter or contact Jesse Pearse on 9319 0555 or email Jesse on jessep@frdgp.com.au.

30 October FAMILY & DOMESTIC VIOLENCE

This is the first of a series of 3 interactive workshops, Workshops 2 and 3 will be held in 2008. For full details please see insert in this newsletter or contact Daniele on 9319 055 or email danielem@frdgp.com.au

14 November CHLAMYDIA INTERACTIVE WORKSHOP

For Practice Nurses and Practice Staff, presented by FPWA Sexual Health Services. For further information please contact Gae Sawyer on 9319 0555 or email gaes@frdgp.com.au

Fremantle GP Network constantly strives to improve the quality and range of services to our practices and welcomes positive feedback and complaints. We invite you to send your comments to reception@frdgp.com.au