



Medicare : What's in an Update?

As part of our routine support to all clients, Kestral will apply all changes required to implement updates to the Medicare Benefits Schedule and, for Karisma clients, updates to the Department of Veterans' Affairs schedule and AMA rates (as required for Workers Compensation invoicing in New South Wales).

In the first half of 2012, a number of updates were released by Medicare Australia. The ways in which Kestral responds to changes to the Medicare Benefits Schedule can offer an interesting insight into the work of our Support and Programming teams.

For our pathology clients, a minor update was implemented in May 2012, which included new genetic item numbers and amendments to the description of a number of patient episode initiation items. These changes were easily accommodated in PLS with a simple update to the fee table and minor modifications to the Kestral library bill script.

For radiology, in March 2012, Medicare introduced MRI item numbers for the evaluation of the integrity of breast implants. These new item numbers were announced

through the media on a Sunday evening by the Hon Tanya Plibersek MP, Minister for Health. Over morning coffee the following day, the chatter within the Support team was regarding the announcement made on ABC News. Within a day, an update was ready to be rolled out to over 60 radiology clients.

Six weeks later, another update to the radiology section was announced and once again the exact details of these changes were uncertain until a few days out from the release date. The change increased the bulk bill incentive rebate for MRI item numbers to 100% of the schedule fee. Designing and implementing this change involved input from all areas of Kestral; including our Programming, Testing and Support teams.

Each time an update is issued by Medicare, all staff at Kestral work together to apply the necessary changes required to PLS, RMS and Karisma and make them available as soon as possible.

To achieve this, numerous procedures must be completed successfully and on time. So, what's in an update?

continued overleaf...



The Upgrade Process

In the first instance, the changes to Medicare must be analysed and understood from a medical as well as invoicing point of view. Medicare rules and the changes that can be applied are many and varied and no two releases are ever the same.

When this analysis has been performed, it can sometimes still be unclear of the best way to proceed. In these cases, Kestral chooses to survey our clients to get their understanding of the changes.

The current state of the billing configuration must also be considered, to ensure the integrity of the historical statistics and accounting information within each of our solutions.

For each site using our products, Kestral reviews the overall configuration; including single/combination exams and tests, report types and RDLs, episode checking scripts and patient populations.

When the review process is complete, new code may need to be written for each Kestral application. Kestral's investment in the development of the bill scripts and rebate library over the past 20 years, usually means that

changes can be applied without writing new code. Occasionally however, Medicare adds a change that does require additional programming.

For Karisma, the rebate library must also be updated and for PLS and RMS, system bill scripts may need to be modified.

With the changes in place, a number of different datasets must be upgraded and the changes tested. Our testing process for Medicare changes involves checking requests with service dates before and after the date on which the changes for Medicare came into effect.

Once these tests are completed, an upgrade procedure is put into place for all staff to follow. Finally, the changes to each solution are rolled out to all client sites.

As you can see, every change from Medicare Australia brings a hive of activity at Kestral. Our Support and Programming teams in particular are quick to respond, making sure our clients get every necessary update as soon as possible. Kestral prides itself on providing clients with the most up to date solutions and the very best support at all times.

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