

Number crunch

Doing the numbers can help practices make better use of care plans.

SUPPORT tools are available for clinical and business analysis in general practice, but you can also use practice management software as an analytical tool.

As part of its business modelling section, the Practice Health Atlas (PHA) asks practices to fill out a table of item number usage and income received.

A practice can use their practice management software to create this table independently of the PHA to analyse item number usage for the previous six- or 12-month period. A 'current number utilisation' Excel spreadsheet, which automatically calculates the number of claims that match the amount received for a particular item number, is available at www.nevdgp.org.au/?content=13#PHA. This web site has other tools to assist this process, developed with the assistance of the Adelaide Western General Practice Network and Mr Julian Flint, health informatics co-ordinator with the network.

The table (see right) is an example of a completed current number utilisation Excel spreadsheet.

The realities of a busy general practice often preclude such a proactive approach to preventive care, and GPs usually place clinical considerations well above the business considerations when running their practice. But if preventive care measures of health assessments, care planning and home visits by pharmacists can improve population health, as well as generate extra income for a practice, then this is a 'win win win' situation — good for the patient, good for

the GP and good for the practice.

The extra income could allow the practice to employ additional practice nurses to take some of the pressure off the GP.

This approach has worked successfully for many practices. As a first step, ask your practice manager to prepare a table of item number use (as shown) for the past 12 months, and use it as a basis for a discussion at a team meeting of clinicians and practice manager.

Then see what happens.

Items of interest from the business modelling perspective in the example (right) include:

1. No annual health assessments in the home (item 702) could suggest the need to employ a nurse or a contract nurse if space in the practice is an issue.
2. The number of 45-year-old health checks (item 717) could be greatly increased with strategies developed by the practice team.
3. There are few reviews of GP management plans or team care arrangements (items 725 and 727), suggesting the need to enhance the use of the recall system.
4. A strategy to increase the number of home medicines reviews (item 900) could be considered by targeting specific patient cohorts. Diabetes Australia recognises that polypharmacy can be beneficial to patients with diabetes, but compliance becomes an issue as they take more tablets. The practice could create a list from a database search of patients with diabetes and have the GP check the suitability of the patients on the list for a home medicines review. ●



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Current number utilisation spreadsheet

Item received	Description	No of claims	\$ Amount
700	Annual health assessment 75 years and over — in consulting room	48	\$8238.80
702	Annual health assessment 75 years and over — not at consulting room, hospital or residential aged care facility	0	
710	Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health check (15-55 years)	0	
712	Residential aged care comprehensive medical assessment	11	\$2136.15
717	45-year-old health check	2	\$200
721	Preparation of a GP management plan by a GP (including on discharge for private patients)	468	\$59,797
723	Co-ordination of team care arrangements by a GP (including on discharge for private patients)	319	\$32,248.95
725	Review of GP management plan by GP	4	\$255.40
727	Co-ordination of a review of team care arrangements by a GP	2	\$127.70
731	Contribution to multi-disciplinary care plan in residential aged care facility	4	\$254.80
734	Organise and co-ordinate case conference in a residential facility	0	
900	Domiciliary medication management review	1	\$134.10
903	Residential medication management review	0	
2517-2526, 2620-2635	Subgroup 2: Diabetes annual cycle of care	98	\$3207.05
2546-2559, 2664-2677	Subgroup 3: Asthma cycle of care	0	
11506	Spirometry	3	\$63
2710	Preparation of GP mental health care plan	213	\$32,577.60
2712	GP mental health care plan review	49	\$5036.60
2713	GP mental health consultation	1	\$91

Total amount \$144,368.15