

Shaping Voluntary Patient Registration (VPR) to Work: a Brisbane South PHN co-designed general practice pilot

Lessons and insights into the role of PHNs to support the transition to MyMedicare

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The challenge

What is the problem, and why is this important?

Voluntary patient registration (VPR), known in Australia as MyMedicare, is a new model to link patients with their preferred primary care team to enhance continuity of care and improve patient health outcomes. MyMedicare opened for general practice registration in July 2023, with patient registration to open in October this year.

Currently, limited and fragmented health care system infrastructure makes it difficult for health care providers to coordinate patient care across multiple providers and teams. MyMedicare aims to formalise the relationship between patients and their GP/general practice to enhance person-centred care. The goal is to help practices and providers better understand and meet patients needs, plus improve patients experience of coordinated care across the health care system.

Between March 2022 and May 2023, Brisbane South PHN commissioned stakeholder engagement activities to understand the key enablers and challenges to implement MyMedicare successfully. We looked at both consumer and general practice perspectives and found that gaining a better understanding of patient needs and fostering whole-of-practice commitment to change are key challenges in shaping the MyMedicare model to work.



The approach

What did we do?

Identifying and overcoming potential unintended consequences of the MyMedicare model, or barriers to practice or patient registration, is key for MyMedicare to be successfully implemented and adopted voluntarily. Targeted engagement and consultation with both consumers and general practice staff was a critical first step to ensuring a smooth transition to the model.

Brisbane South PHN commissioned a consumer-focused engagement activity to understand consumer views about access to and engagement with GPs and potential barriers to patient registration.

Informed by these understandings, we then commissioned our 'Shaping VPR to Work: A co-designed general practice pilot' to understand the essential requirements and challenges to implement VPR from a general practice perspective. The insights gained through these activities provided a rich understanding of the critical enablers and challenges to implement MyMedicare. They deepened our understanding of the role of PHNs in building capacity and capability within general practice teams to drive the change management actions required to support effective patient registration.



The impact

What was the impact of the work?

The results of our stakeholder engagement highlights support for a system that places the consumer at the centre of their care, with linked services focused on the health and wellbeing of the whole person. Consumers emphasised various intersecting and dynamic factors that impact their ability to develop enduring relationships with general practice. These include the social determinants of health, health literacy, identity and psychosocial wellbeing, the complexity of health conditions, social networks, and access to transport.

Our work with general practices demonstrated several prerequisite steps to enable the transition to MyMedicare, including actively working to establish a conducive environment for change. These include:

1. Provide a clear understanding of the value proposition and benefits of MyMedicare for key stakeholders.
2. Adopt an incremental change management approach to achieve successful implementation.
3. Use practice data to explore patient demand and practice supply factors – a critical foundation of MyMedicare. Understanding patient population and specific needs is essential to providing quality continuity of care.
4. Increase confidence in practice teams' ability to implement preparatory administrative MyMedicare processes through coaching activities and action learning.
5. Understand the importance of practice staff buy-in and the human factors associated with change processes.
6. Raise awareness that patient registration alone will not achieve the goals of MyMedicare. Registration is the beginning of understanding practice patient populations and forms the foundation for reform initiatives.



The learnings

What are the learnings for PHNs?

Actions to prepare general practices for MyMedicare:

- **Begin with clean practice data.**
Practices can start by working with their PHN to undertake data-cleansing activities to enhance their understanding of their practice population and need. Value-based care can only be achieved through understanding the practice population.
- **Identify your change champions.**
Change management for MyMedicare requires a whole-of-practice commitment for successful adoption. Practices can prepare by building a core team to champion the iterative change process and establish the value proposition of registration for their practice. Developing an understanding of the reinforcing and restraining factors unique to their practice context that may impact implementation will help ensure success.
- **Consider opportunities for teams-care.**
General practices must balance patient needs against clinician supply, given current workforce shortages. This can only be facilitated through expanding GP-led micro teams within practices to involve nursing and allied health professionals to jointly deliver care.

The role of PHNs in the transition to MyMedicare:

- **Model change management processes.**
Support practice teams through change management, facilitated through education, coaching and learning resources to step through the prerequisite registration processes.
- **Support clinical data evaluation.**
Build the capability of practice staff to understand and analyse their practice population through their clinical information tools to make meaning from their data.
- **Keep messaging person-centred and practice-specific.**
Incorporating person-centred principles with practice-specific contexts helps to deliver the key messages and value proposition of MyMedicare to practice and consumers.

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