



CASE STUDY

The trials of a clinical psychologist

Written by Richard J Bell, Clinical Psychologist

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*Richard J Bell
Clinical Psychologist*

Introduction

I am a Clinical Psychologist with 18 years experience in public mental health settings in Victoria and Western Australia. Eighteen months ago I made the leap into the unfamiliar environment of a small private practice in an under resourced outer suburb of Melbourne.

Referrals trickled in for a while and then grew to a healthy flow as local GPs took up the new Medicare items for their patients. My clinical and management experience in the public system impressed upon me the need for an efficient system for creating and storing clinical records...and of course the endeavour needed to run as a business: reports to GPs, billing clients and batching off to Medicare. Enter, Global Health with a team of helpful IT savvy types.

The magic of MHAGIC

I had been tracking Global Health's development of the system they call MHAGIC (Mental Health Assessment Generation and Information Collection) for some years. Working at the time in a service renowned for its acronym birth rate, I was impressed by how these letters came together. More importantly, I was impressed by the magic of MHAGIC.

This system, I believe, was built to drive the medical records for the Mental Health Service of the Australian Capital Territory. The comprehensive features of this program jumped out at me and screamed extensive collaboration with clinicians, the clinical governance gurus and the quality assurance committee. The system has a range of assessment and report templates, including drop down menus and tick boxes to make life easier. The prompts for the mental state examination leave no rock unturned...and then at the push of the "wizard" button, MHAGIC constructs a report.

A paperless clinical record is possible, entries can be PDF'd, dated and tamper-proofed. But if this sounds too fancy, the basic functions of storing client demographics and templates for letters and reports enable you to keep up with your letters to GPs. The system is flexible, and with assistance from the support team you are able to design templates for your specific needs.

Now for the money

While awaiting arrival of my laptop, I spent a few weeks filling in Medicare Bulk Bill vouchers with the prescribed black pen. Time consuming, repetitive, black pens like black socks, go missing and the snail mail processing lived up to its name. Global Health has ReferralNet which now handles my accounts. ReferralNet has an online billing system which links client information from my MHAGIC database with Medicare claiming formats.

Bulk Bill claims have the Medicare rebate delivered to my bank account via EFT in 3 – 4 days. For clients who pay upfront and above the rebate, the online system delivers the rebate to the client's bank account. The online billing system requires a computer connected to the Internet and some initial, confusing but achievable form faxing to Medicare. Card readers and EFTPOS terminals are not required. So I can run the system from home and take printouts of the necessary paper work to my private practice. This seems to be fairly fuss free and reduces the need for computer or Internet access in my private practice room.

Focus on clinical work

I have been known to tinker with clinical database development in the past and the temptation to home brew a database for my private practice was intrusive and distracting. However, to my relief, Global Health with MHAGIC and ReferralNet, provided a system which impressed me and now cocoons my practice, enabling me to focus on my area of expertise – the clinical work.

– Richard J Bell –