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Allison, Hanna (SEN)

From: Stephen Scholem [docmus@optushome.com.au]
Sent: Wednesday, 18 June 2003 10:06 PM
To: Medicare, Committee (SEN)
Subject: Late Submission

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Submission to the Senate Enquiry on Medicare

For the past 21 years my husband has worked in his solo practice in suburban Sydney. In January 2001 we stopped universal bulk billing and now charge \$40 for a standard consultation, \$33 for patients on a part pension and we bulk bill full pensioners. The reasons we changed were as follows:

- 1) The false concept of "free" consultations meant my husband had to see many patients who could have used common sense and/or over the counter medication for their ailments or their children's ailments. The practice was offering a service that was not appreciated by many of the patients : a thorough caring doctor who would spend as much time as needed in a consultation and do house calls in the middle of the night if neededfor "free". The bulk billing system was abused by too many patients for it to continue.
- 2) The number of patients my husband needed to see to cover costs and make a reasonable income was too many and extremely stressful. I felt in the long term it would endanger his health.
- 3) He lost hope that the rebate would ever catch up or begin to reflect the real cost of seeing patients and running a business. We realised it was time for **our family** to stop subsidising Medicare for the public.

We haven't looked back since the big switch. About 30% of the patients left - he now sees a manageable number per day (including house calls). The patients that stayed appreciate the extra time he has and his happier mood generally. I know he will charge accordingly and those paying seem to listen to his advice more willingly.

The Government's Medicare Package and the Opposition's Medicare Package both **miss** the crucial fact that doctors are over trusting **any** government with their future. The only solution is to listen to the doctors and their representatives to understand the situation and then re think the Packages.

Your Sincerely

Deborah Scholem
Doctor's wife

19/06/2003