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# SMA NEWS

## SMA Managed Care Survey 2003

### Editorial note:

All data and discussions are based on results obtained from the survey. We welcome feedback from members. Please send your letters to fax: 6224 7827 or email: [practice@sma.org.sg](mailto:practice@sma.org.sg). Please also see page 4 for a write-up on Managed Care.

### INTRODUCTION

This is the first report of the SMA Managed Care Survey 2003 conducted by the SMA Private Practice Committee. The summary of the main findings in this first report is to provide an overview of the experience with Managed Care in Singapore in the following areas:

- level of satisfaction with the various Managed Care schemes;
- payment periods;
- percentage of patients and earnings from Managed Care; and
- whether Managed Care Organisations (MCOs) should continue to operate in Singapore.

The Committee welcomes your feedback. It will help the Committee to decide immediate follow-up actions and to chart future directions in addressing the issues of Managed Care in Singapore. Subsequent reports of the other survey results will follow.

### METHOD

The SMA Managed Care survey forms were first mailed out in the monthly SMA Mailbag to all members in mid-January 2003, with a cover letter from the Chairman of the Private Practice Committee, explaining the purpose of the survey. A repeat mail-out was done in mid-February.

The survey questions sought to obtain information about

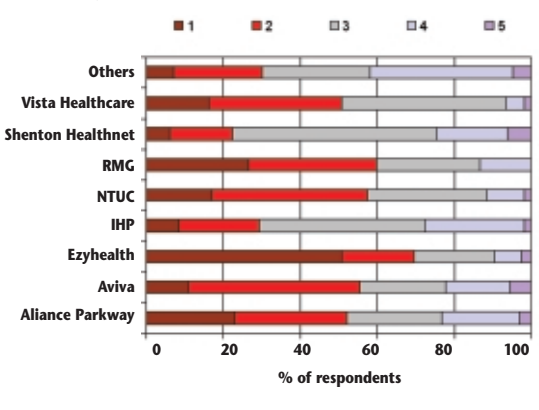
#### I. Clinic Profile

- Q1: Location
- Q2: Clinic hours
- Q3: Percentage of clinic's patients who are under Managed Care schemes / corporate contracts

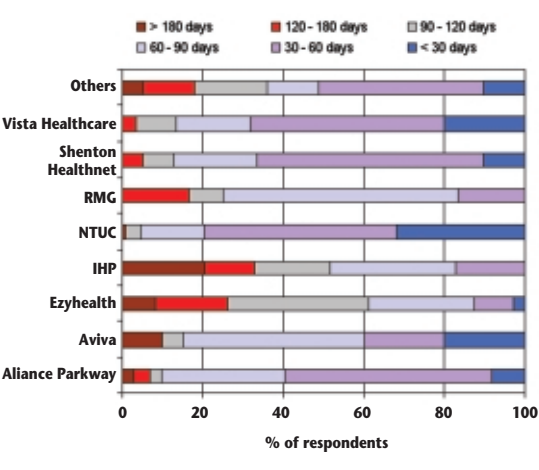
#### II. Managed Care Organisations (MCOs)

- Q1: My clinic handles patients from the following organisations: NTUC MHS / IHP / Ezyhealth Schemes /

**Figure 1: Doctor's satisfaction with Managed Care scheme, graded on a scale of 1 to 5 ("very dissatisfied" to "couldn't be better").**



**Figure 2: Respondents' feedback on payment period after invoicing.**



Alliance Parkway / Vista Healthcare / Shenton Healthnet / RMG Affiliated Clinics Scheme / Others

Q2: Doctor's satisfaction with scheme. Please grade on scale of 1 to 5 ("very dissatisfied" to "couldn't be better").

Q3: Payment period after invoicing. E.g. within 30 days, 30 - 60 days, 60 - 90 days, 90 - 120 days, 120 - 180 days, more than 180 days.



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- Q4: Restriction to prescribe medicine of doctor's choice, on scale of 1 to 5 ("very restrictive" to "very autonomous").
- Q5: Restriction to refer to specialist, on scale of 1 to 5 ("very restrictive" to "very autonomous").
- Q6: Patient's satisfaction/feedback on restriction to medicine/referral, on scale of 1 to 5 ("rarely" to "very often").
- Q7: Managed Care earnings account for what percentage of total clinic's earnings. E.g. 0% to 100%.

**III. Doctor's Wish**

- Q1: Do you think MCOs should continue to operate in Singapore?
- Q2: My preference is for (rank in order of fairness to doctor)
  - (a) fee-for-service,
  - (b) fixed capitation/fixed co-payment,
  - (c) doctor taking full risk.
- Q3: Do you think MCOs should be liable if corporate clients fail to pay?

**RESULTS**

A total of 169 GPs and 51 specialists responded to the survey.

**1. Satisfaction with MCOs**

More than half of the respondents were dissatisfied with the respective Managed Care schemes that they were on. (See Figure 1.) Based on the survey data, some schemes also received less negative feedback from respondents.

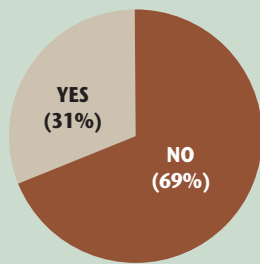
**2. Payment period**

Based on the respondents' feedback, the average payment period for most MCOs is between 30 to 90 days. (See Figure 2.)

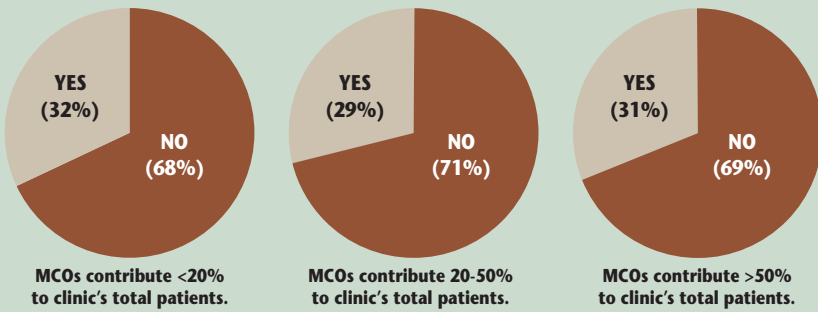
**3. Should MCOs continue to operate in Singapore?**

Of the respondents who gave their opinion, the majority felt that MCOs should not continue to operate in Singapore. (See Figure 3.) Even when the MCOs contributed a large share to the clinic's total patient load or total earnings, the doctors had the same opinion. (See Figures 3a and 3b respectively.)

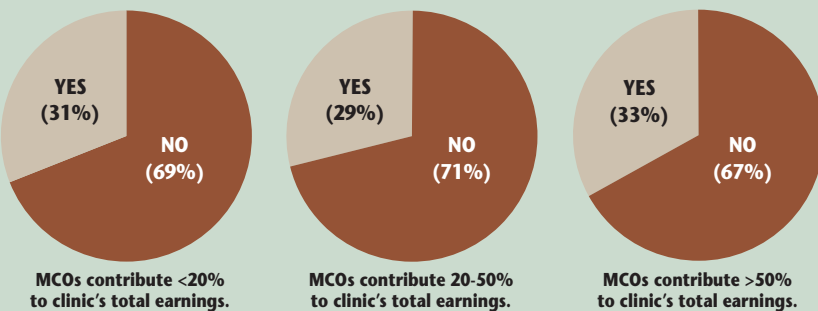
**Figure 3: Should MCOs continue to operate in Singapore?**



**Figure 3a: Yes/No responses correlated to MCOs contribution to clinic's total patients.**



**Figure 3b: Yes/No responses correlated to MCOs' contribution to clinic's total earnings.**



**IN SUMMARY**

Figure 1 showed the dissatisfaction level was highest for Ezyhealth, followed by RMG and NTUC. The highest rating in terms of satisfaction was scored by Shenton Healthnet and IHP.

Figure 2 showed that Ezyhealth and IHP were slowest when making payment to doctors, taking 90 days and above. The shortest payment periods were recorded for NTUC, Shenton Healthnet and Vista.

Figure 3 showed that the majority of GPs and specialists who participated in the survey were not in favour of MCOs operating in Singapore.

The SMA Council is concerned that the returns may be reflective of the general ground sentiments on Managed Care in Singapore. We welcome further comments and feedback from our members. ■

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