

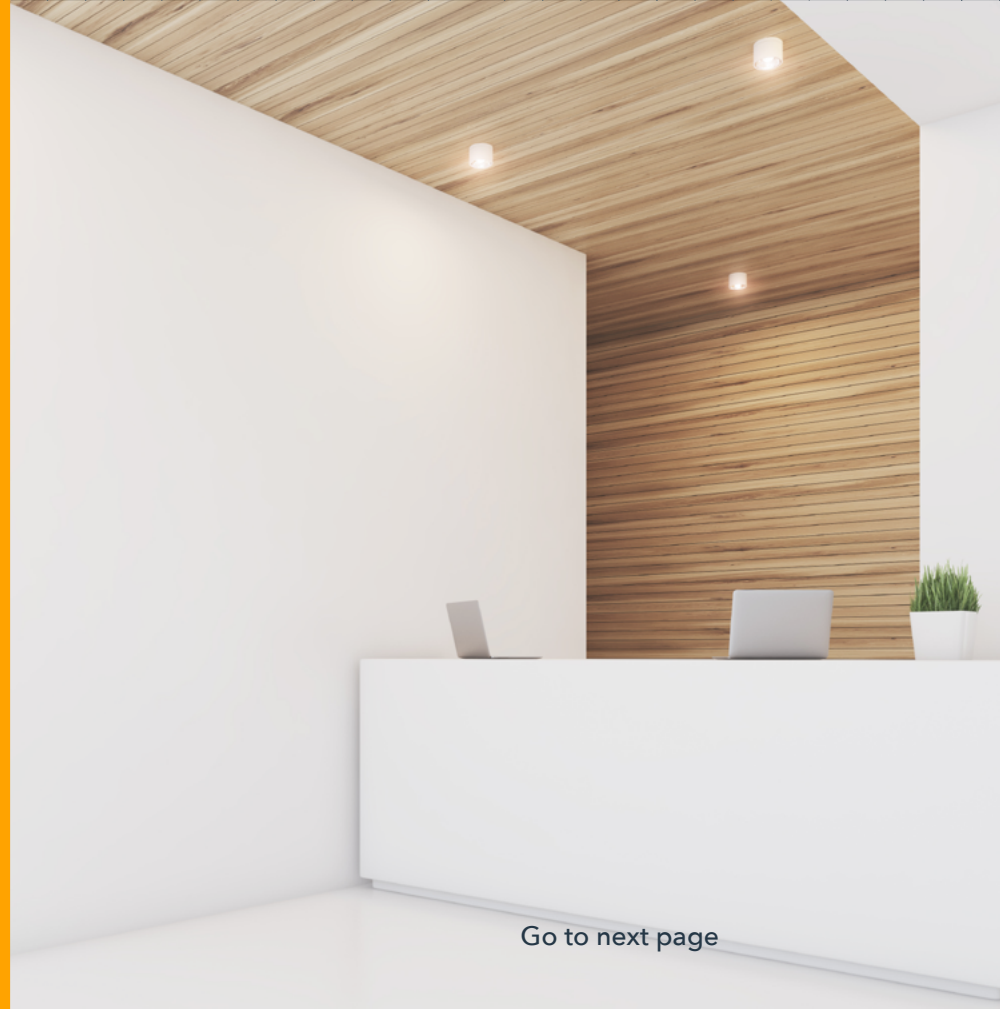


Genie Solutions

presents

Starting out in private practice

**your blueprint for
success**



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Chapter 1

Genie Solutions – your qualified guide

At Genie Solutions, we understand the complexities of medical practice. We're proud of our 25 years' experience in the medical software industry, where we serve more than 4,500 practices and 21,000 medical professionals with Genie and Gentu. We've helped so many specialists set up for practice, and we're committed to helping you too.

Your long-term success is important to us, so we won't throw you in the deep end and expect you to swim. Whether you need help navigating the business of your practice or establishing your clinical workflows, you can think of us as your coaches and in the unlikely event you need us - your lifesavers.

We know your patients are your priority, so our priority is supporting you.

When you join the Genie Solutions network, you'll benefit from our culture of innovation – it's ingrained in everything we do. Our teams are always encouraged to explore new ideas, concepts and technologies, so we can co-design and deliver bigger and better innovations now and into the future.

Contact Us

We have local teams in Brisbane, Sydney, Melbourne, Adelaide and Perth standing by to answer your questions.



1300 889 362



sales@geniesolutions.com.au

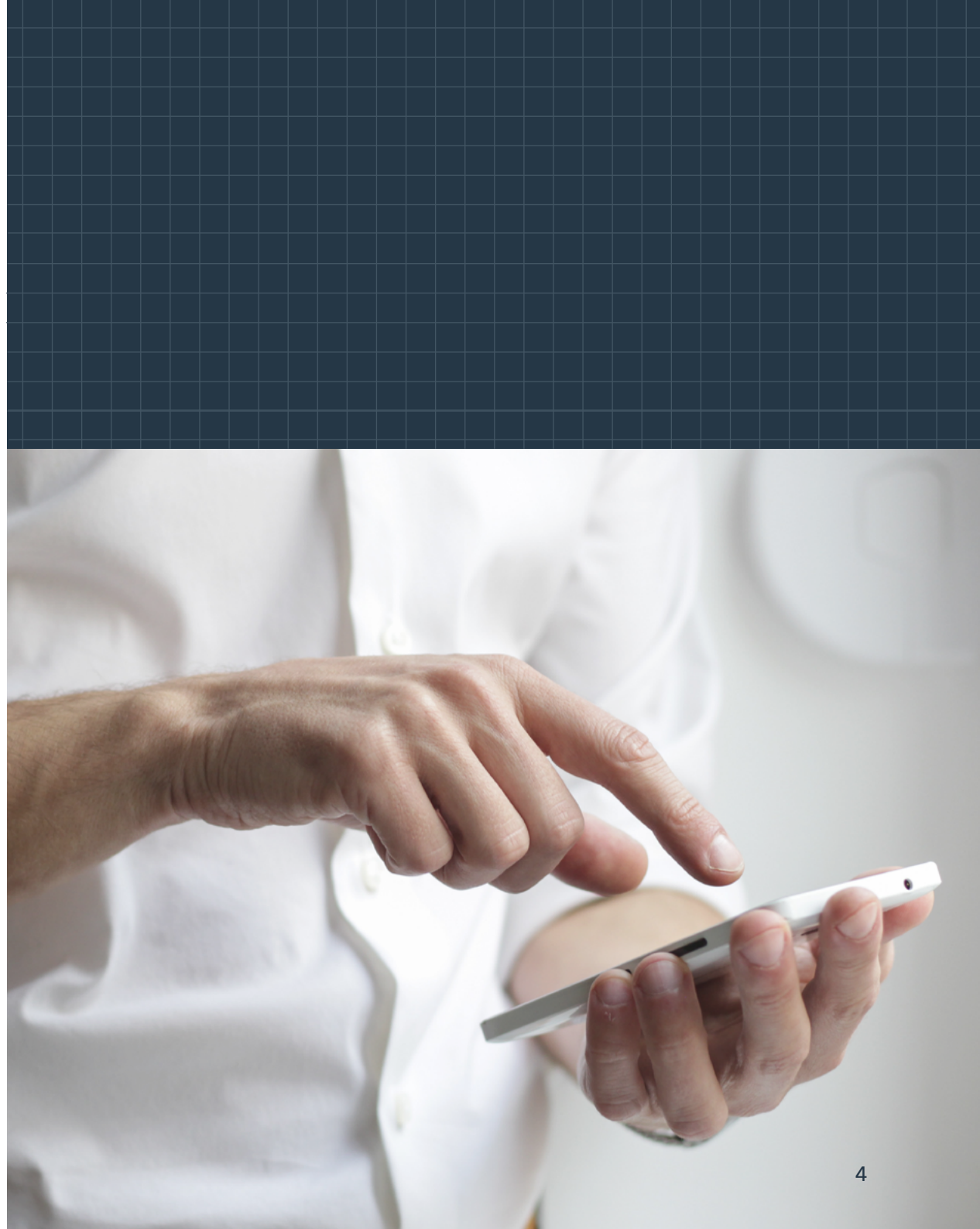


www.geniesolutionssoftware.com.au

*The Research

Throughout this guide you'll notice references to research we conducted in late 2018. We surveyed our customers to get a better understanding of who they were, how they worked and what they wanted from our products and services.

We received over 900 responses from Specialists and Practice Managers nationwide and gained valuable insights that we'll share with you throughout this guide.





Chapter 2

To open a private practice (or not to...)

Another day in our brave new world, and another decision to make.

Whether you choose to open a private practice or not, this decision is one we know will impact you - both personally and professionally.

So, settle into a comfy chair, put your feet up and let us to guide you through all the considerations of private practice.

Playing the long game

Building a great practice is like a very long game of Tetris; from accounting, staffing and billing to outfitting and, of course, choosing the right practice management software - your success requires the various pieces of the practice to fit together in just the right ways.

We work with specialists like you every day and we've been there and done that more than a few times over. So here are some recommendations we've collated to help you get off on the right foot.

Research and plan



Chat to colleagues in your professional networks – a wide range of perspectives from other specialists, practice managers, administration staff, and nurses should help you get a feel for the options.



Consider establishing more formal mentorships or fellowships with practitioners in your field and business relationships with specialist advisers. A mentor may help you choose the right pathways and give you the confidence you need to forge ahead.



Establish strong networks of GPs, whose referrals will generate the majority of your business.

A foundation of strong relationships and strategic objectives to steer you in the right direction will reduce uncertainty and stress and ensure your first experiences in private practice are positive ones.

The right path, for you

So, you've weighed the pro's and con's and decided private practice is a good fit for you. What now?

There are a few options to consider:

- 1 Go out on your own** - find the right practice space, fit it out, hire and train staff, implement IT systems, processes, hardware and software.
- 2 Go out on your own (with virtual support)** - find the right practice space, fit it out, implement IT systems, processes, hardware and software and employ virtual practice management resources to run your practice.
- 3 Rent a room in an existing practice or sessional suites** - allows you flexibility to continue other medical work, such as working in the public health system, while building your business. If you remain an independent provider but share rooms, you still get to enjoy clinical autonomy.
- 4 Join a collective of specialists** - to take advantage of the benefits of shared resources - such as staffing, IT and rent - which reduces your costs. Just remember to put agreements in place for managing clinical data, e.g. who does the patient data belong to if one of you wants to leave?

Our **Certified Adviser** group is made up of IT experts and Practice Management consultants who can assist you in getting set up.

Other things to consider:

- + Do you plan to consult five days a week or just a couple of days alongside work in the public system?
- + Which approach will give you the most freedom and flexibility to look after your patients, build your business and meet your personal and professional goals?
- + What does success look like to you?
- + What can you do now to set yourself up for future success?
- + How many patients do you hope to see in your private practice, and do you think you can generate the demand required to succeed?



Chapter 2

Checklist

Plan your approach:

Talk to colleagues – doctors, practice managers, nurses

Investigate mentorships or fellowships with practitioners in your field

Establish business relationships with specialist advisers

Consider which path makes the most sense:

Going out on your own

Renting a room in an existing practice

Renting a room in sessional suites

Joining a collective of specialists

Questions to ask to yourself / take into consideration:

Do you plan to consult four or five days a week or just a couple of days and continue to work in public hospitals?

Which approach will give you the most freedom and flexibility to look after your patients, build your business and meet your priorities?

Where do you see yourself in 10 years?

What do you need to put in place today in order to get there?

Do you have a goal in terms of the number of patients you hope to see?

Chapter 3

Up and running (your practice)








Find a space

Practice location is important. We recommend conducting some competitor research to ensure you can generate demand for your specialty services in the area. It's better to set up somewhere with a need for practices in your niche, than compete with neighbouring practices for the same business.



Next, you'll need to find a space to practice.

Our research* suggests opting for more space than you think you'll need. It might help to make a list of all the items you may need space for in your consulting room, such as:

-  A room big enough for a bed and a desk
-  Somewhere for your patient to change
-  Enough space to comfortably work around your patient, and if needed, bring in equipment
-  Power to run diagnostic equipment such as ultrasound machines
-  A nurse's station

All about your fitout

Once you've chosen your space, you'll need to think about fitout.

It's important to understand the legal and regulatory requirements - for example, rooms used for minor surgical procedures need to be accredited to ensure flooring, surfaces and walls are fit-for-purpose.

The [Australasian Health Infrastructure Alliance](#) (AHIA) offers comprehensive guidelines on the planning, design and setup of healthcare facilities.

You can also pay a specialised consultant to fitout your space to regulatory standards, maximise the use of space, and ensure comfort for you, your staff, and your patients. A good fitout can increase the amount of space you have for consultations, so you can see more patients - sooner, reduce waitlists, increase your cashflow, and improve the patient experience - all at once!

Genie Solutions works with [trusted businesses](#) who specialise in fitouts for practices just like yours. **Get in touch to request a list.**

See patients sooner

Reduce waitlists

Increase cashflow

Improve patient experience

Fill your rooms

We can't promise it will be a fun and stress-free time for you, but you'll also need to invest in the day-to-day essentials needed to run a practice.

Get the ball rolling on the basics, like phones and phone numbers, email addresses and all the devices you'll need to communicate with your patients, GPs, Medicare and private health funds.

This includes EFTPOS facilities and HICAPs, used in Allied Health for outpatient billing.

We've partnered with Ezidebit, Australia's leading payments company, to bring our customers Patient Payments. Patient Payments quickly transfers the payment amount from your EFTPOS terminal to your Genie Solutions software, automatically receipting and seamlessly reconciling the payment. This reduces user keying errors and the time required to fix them.



Get in touch with our team on **1300 889 362** or via [email](#) to learn more.

Logistics and more

You'll also need to make a list of office and practice supplies, such as bins for medical waste, dedicated sharps disposal for needles etc.



Other considerations:



Computers and printers



Security cameras, alarms and security protocols for staff (to protect them in the event they feel threatened by a patient, or need immediate assistance)



Staff and patient confidentiality training in line with the [Australian National Privacy Principles](#)



Fire accreditations - varied in each state



Toilet facilities for able-bodied and disabled patients



Disabled access to your premises



Consider outsourcing office-maintenance services, such as cleaning

Refer to the appendix for helpful links and resources referenced in this chapter.

Chapter 3

Checklist

Consider the best location for your new practice – aim for an area that needs your specialty, not one that's oversaturated

Familiarise yourself with the Australasian **Health Infrastructure Alliance** (AHIA) guidelines

Is a practice fit out consultant is the better set up option for you, rather than doing the setup yourself

Familiarise yourself with the **Australian National Privacy Principles**

Ensure your space has fire accreditation

Ensure your space has disabled access and disabled toilet facilities (along with able-bodied facilities)

Organise phone numbers and email addresses for yourself and practice staff

Set up security (camera's, alarms, general staff safety measures)

Hire a regular cleaner for the practice

Ensure you can provide adequate toilet facilities for able and disabled patients

Arrange sanitary services for the female bathrooms

Purchase day to day equipment you'll need:

EFTPOS terminal (can be ordered through your banking organisation)

HICAPS Terminal (can be ordered via this **form**)

Phones

Stationary

IT Hardware such as computers, printers, etc. (the software you choose to run your practice may influence what hardware you purchase - more on that in Chapter 5)

Medical waste bins, sharps disposal, regular bins

Ensure your landlords have had the building fire safety accredited

Ensure there's a way to allow disabled patients to visit your practice



Chapter 4

Staffing and employment agreements

Your staffing decisions can be central to a great patient experience at your practice.

If you need some time on opening to assess your needs before you hire staff, you can employ virtual reception services to bridge the gap.

Virtual reception services reduce the upfront cost of training and provide automatic coverage of calls to your practice.

You can use the extra time to settle into your new role as practice owner without added responsibility for staff. We work with a number of trusted partners who specialise in virtual practice management and are part of our **Certified Adviser** program.

If you decide to employ staff straight off the bat, then your most important hire is your Practice Manager. A highly experienced Practice Manager is crucial to support your setup and steer you through complex business issues, like payments through Medicare and private health funds.

There are a number of fantastic organisations to look to while recruiting, like the [Australian Association of Practice Management](#), who post vacancies on their job board. You can also use a recruiter, or advertise in the healthcare section of online job sites such as [Seek](#) or [Indeed](#). The [Australian Medical Association](#) also provide advice and advertising services when you're searching for experienced staff, as well as information about employment conditions and award rates. Your employees are entitled to the minimum protections and conditions set out under the [National Employment Standards](#), such as maximum weekly hours, annual leave, parental leave and long service leave.

As your practice grows, you'll need to establish procedures for hiring, on-boarding and ongoing training so every new hire is seamlessly integrated into your practice. If need be, seek advice from a legal expert to help you with contracts and agreements.

We also recommend hiring your own receptionist.

Even if you share practice space with other practitioners, your own dedicated receptionist will always prioritise you, your appointments, and your billing requirements.

The importance of good relationships



As a part of our research*, we asked some of our customers to share their advice on staffing:



Employ staff who care about the patients and will go the extra mile to look after them



Be willing to pay a bit extra to attract the right people, and look after them so they stay with you



Ensure your administrative staff are properly trained in the use of your practice management software



Invest in your staff, provide them with ongoing training and development, like that provided by your software vendor, to ensure you are getting the most out of it



Establish good communication skills and processes throughout the business

Chapter 4

Checklist

Decide whether to use a virtual reception or if you'll hire your own staff

We recommend looking at our **Certified Adviser** network for reputable organisations who can assist you with virtual reception

Establish procedures for:

- └ Hiring
- Onboarding
- Ongoing Training

Resources for Hiring:

- └ **Australian Association of Practice Management (AAPM)**
- Seek**
- Indeed**
- The Australian Medical Association (AMA)**
- National Employment Standards**

Chapter 5

Hardware and software



Hardware and software

Practice management software is the beating heart of a successful practice. Most software vendors will serve a suite of features and functionality for appointments, billing, reporting and business insights - but for your software to be a true asset to your business, and one that sets you up for sustainable, long-term success - you should expect more.

Our most successful practices find the differentiating factor is not found in a huge depth and breadth of features and functionality - many of which won't be useful to you - but in the focus on a high-quality experience for practitioners and staff, that delivers the best results for the people in their care.

Let's start by asking the important questions:

- + What problems am I looking for a software solution to solve?
- + Will my practice management software easily manage billing and clinical management?
- + Will my practice management provider offer local Customer Support?
- + Do I need to work with an IT provider?
- + How do I ensure my data is secure?
- + What hardware will I need?
- + How will I be trained?

So, what *should* you expect?

Based on our research* specialists select practice management software based on a combination of specialty-specific requirements and ease of use.

To help you determine your needs and make the right decision for your practice, we suggest you ask the following questions:

- + Are there **specialists like you** using it, and if so, do they like it?
- + What's the **reputation** of the software provider?
- + Do they take a **practitioner-centred approach** to understand your needs and wants?
- + Does the provider work with **real users** to research, design and build their software?
- + What sorts of **training and support** do they provide?
- + Does the provider regularly release updates with **new features and improvements** to the program?
- + What are the **terms of the contract**, and do I have any **flexibility**?

Whatever you do, don't make your decision on price alone, look for software that will meet your needs now and grow with you into the future.

Make sure your software solution has a core set of the tools you're most likely to use. Our research tells us the five tools specialty practices commonly use are:

- 1 Diagnostic Results Viewers
- 2 Secure Messaging
- 3 Accounting Software
- 4 Medical Billing Software
- 5 Transcription

Make the most of your software

We asked specialists and practice managers to tell us what advice they would give a specialist just starting out with practice management software.

Here's what they said.

Go paperless from the outset: An electronic office means everything you need is at your fingertips – use your software to securely store all clinical records and patient details to avoid confusion, lost or misplaced data and clutter.

Add to the paperless experience by using ECLIPSE to lodge claims electronically. It speeds up the lodgement process, simplifies complex claims and allows more oversight on patient data like Medicare and health fund details.

Most importantly, you get paid faster. Refer to [this guide on ECLIPSE](#) from Medicare to get started.

Take your time: Take the time and space you need to get your software up and running and ensure you and your staff are thoroughly trained on all the features and functionality they need to effectively and efficiently manage your practice, and enhance the patient experience.

Make the most of your appointment database: Your appointment database is the foundation of your day-to-day business, a crucial feature for both specialists and practice staff.

Moreover, your data contains a host of powerful insights, like financial trends, that will help you understand and run your business better. So, it's important to extract your data and create regular reports you can reference.

Genie and Gentu each have extensive reporting functions with useful visual aids to help you to gather insights and act on them.

Your options: cloud, hosted and desktop

Our research identified a growing preference for cloud-based software, but is a cloud solution right for you?

If you're just getting started and forging your own path - a cloud product is probably the right fit, but if you're partnering with another doctor and you each require a suite of features and functionality specific to your specialty services - a desktop solution may be better suited to you right now.

Head in the cloud(s)

It's important to understand how "true cloud" compares with a hosted software solution. Hosted software requires an independent IT provider to host your data, where a true cloud solution like Gentu is hosted in the cloud – so there's no need for third party IT providers.

True cloud also means your solution is continuously improved and updated regularly without interruption to your business, so you are always on the frontline of new technologies, features and functionality, and you benefit from them sooner. True cloud solutions like Gentu eliminates the need for outdated middleware.**

Other benefits include:



Instant access to your practice, anywhere, anytime



Access on desktop Mac, PC or on any smart device with an internet connection



Automated backups



Online claiming - automatic report retrieval and automated receipts, removing tedious manual tasks



Paperless and secure patient data management, communications tools and prescribing



True cloud = no need to install and update middleware



****What's middleware?**

Some software touted as a cloud solution is really a hybridised software that relies on components that are locally installed on a computer, meaning they can be subject to the same performance and compatibility issues desktop software are susceptible to. In a cloud environment, middleware is used as a "quick fix" as it requires less development effort than a true cloud solution and directly integrating with service providers such as Pathology and Radiology companies to download results.

On your desk(top) - with IT support

Desktop software runs without an internet connection on a Windows or Mac desktop computer or laptop. It also requires a third-party IT provider to set up your hardware and help you manage your data.

Among the benefits of desktop software:



Extensive list of features and functionality



You can see where your data is stored - all your data stays in your network, on your premises



No need to rely on an internet connection



Be hosted

You can also go with a hosted desktop solution, where your software is installed on third party computing infrastructure, in their data centre. Among the advantages of a hosted approach are:



Outsourcing IT will save you time



Peace of mind with reliable hardware and more secure data storage off your premises



No hardware cost to purchase a server

We work with trusted IT experts who are part of our **Certified Adviser** program, they assist you with all your IT needs.

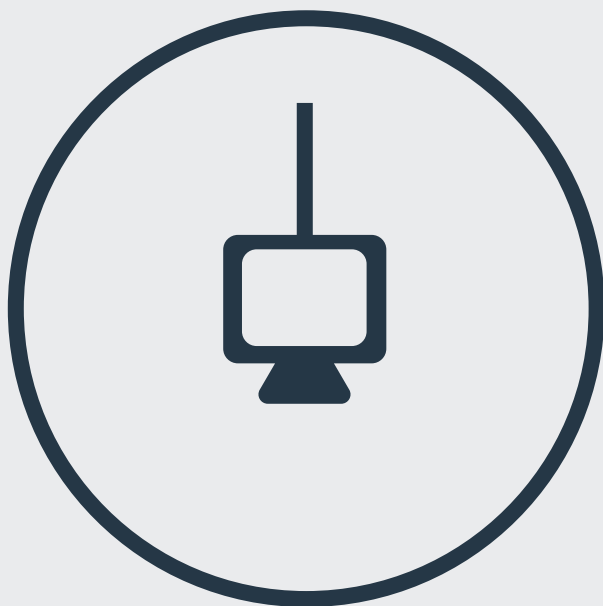
Data security

Theft of medical data from cyber and ransomware attacks in the healthcare industry have shutdown entire networks of servers around the world. Investing in data backup and security is a must, for the privacy of your patients and for your peace of mind.

Security in the cloud

At Genie Solutions we employ gold-standard cloud hosting from Amazon Web Services (AWS), and all patient data is stored in secure data centres on-shore, in Australia. This means we benefit from a sophisticated data centre and network architecture built to meet the requirements of the most security-sensitive organisations in the world, including the Australian Military.

You can read more about AWS' security and compliance [here](#).



When choosing a cloud software provider, you should ensure their security includes:

- 1 Physical security:** servers are housed in nondescript facilities with strict authentication, video surveillance and personnel supervision
- 2 Network security:** firewalls and isolating technologies shield the solution from internal and external attack
- 3 Server security:** a customised, security-hardened operating system maintains the servers across multiple data centres, all within Australia
- 4 Tight security features:** strong password access, using a combination of letters, numbers and symbols, as well as multi-factor authentication that requires the user to verify their identity are integral to keeping your environment secure
- 5 User roles:** setting user account permissions protects your data by ensuring only those who need to access certain files or documents can do so

To reduce risk, make sure you use up-to-date anti-virus software and avoid using public Wi-Fi networks to access sensitive data; public wi-fi networks are incredibly vulnerable to attack.



Desktop security

Unlike the cloud, desktop security isn't automatically managed within your software. You're responsible for ensuring the data on your system is secure, so you'll need to put some rigorous security measures in place. These should include:



Backup processes: make sure your data is backed up in at least two places, such as an external device and a trusted cloud host



Anti-virus software: for an extra layer of protection. Make sure it's up to date!



Be suspicious: if an email doesn't look right, delete it and train your staff to do the same. Attachments or links from phishing emails are often infected with malware and one stray click can cause a data breach.



Secure your file transfers: when sending files to a third party, use a file transfer system that encrypts your files end-to-end.



Secure passwords: pay attention to your passwords because simple ones make you vulnerable to hacking. Make passwords as long and complicated as possible, use a secure system like LastPass or MyGlue to store and remember them for you, and discourage staff from sharing.

Get your hardware in order

Practice owners tell us that robust hardware is critical, so invest in high quality desktops, laptops, scanners and printers that can talk to your software.

TIP: ask your colleagues which scanners and printers they use - cheap, faulty hardware can significantly impact your business - and the best decision for you might not be the most obvious.

Your software provider should also be able to recommend a setup based on the hardware their other customers use. For example, we work closely with trusted partners in the IT industry who form our [**Certified Adviser**](#) program, in all major cities in Australia.



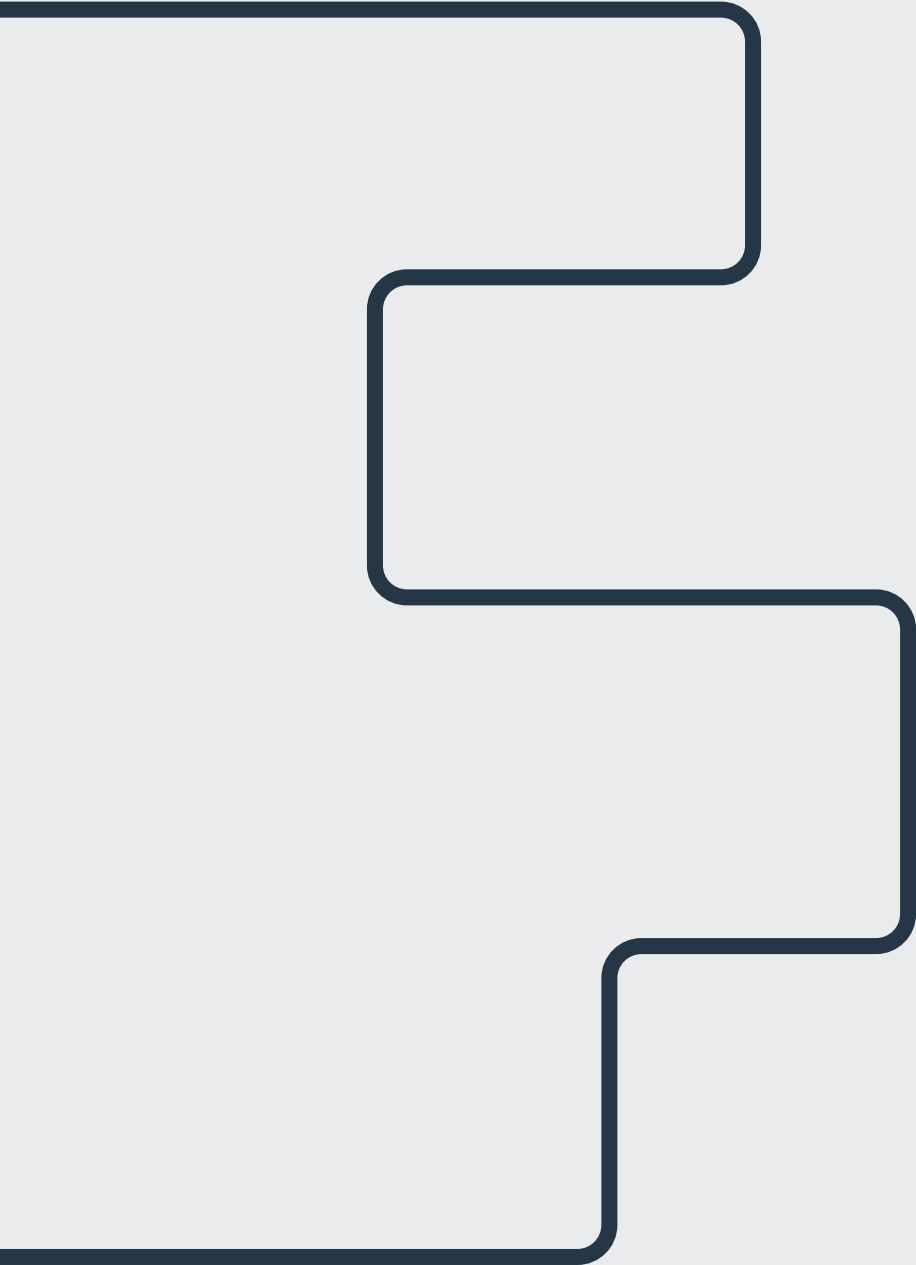
Committed to supporting you

We provide Australian Specialists a choice of two practice management software products.

Genie, our desktop solution, has been crafted over two decades. It's a great solution for large, complex practices that require robust software with a huge depth of specialty-specific features and functionality. It has thousands of intelligent functions and a broad range of customisable features to suit practices' individual needs.

In 2017, we launched our cloud solution, Gentu - a smart, intuitive platform built and continuously improved on modern and emerging technologies and design principles. Gentu is co-designed with you and offers the mobility and peace of mind of a true cloud product. It's flexible and perfect for small practices and people on-the-go who want to access their data anytime, anywhere.





We offer a range of discounts, training and support for specialists who are new to private practice:



50% discount off your Gentu license for the first 6 months



Free ECLIPSE training with one of our experienced Training & Installation Consultants



Assistance to set up your letterhead templates and invoices with your logo and brand



A checklist guide to help you every step of the way



A Knowledgebase, which gives you access to step by step instructions for features in the software



Support team whose depth of knowledge means help is just a phone call or email away

Talk to our team about your options at

sales@geniesolutions.com.au

or call us on **1300 889 362.**

Chapter 5

Checklist

Revisit these questions before starting your search for a practice management software solution:

What features am I looking for from a software solution?

Will my practice management software easily manage billing and clinical management?

Will my practice management provider offer local Customer Support?

Do I need to work with an IT provider?

How do I ensure my data is secure?

What hardware will I need?

When assessing a software solution, ask yourself:

Who else uses the software and can you get testimonials?

What's the reputation of the software provider and do they understand your practice's needs?

What type of training and support does the provider offer?

Does the software provider regularly release updates with new features and improvements to the program?

Does the provider involve users in the way they design their products?

What are the terms of your contract? Don't lock yourself into something you won't be able to get out of if the software doesn't meet your expectations.

Look for software that will meet your needs now and well into the future of the practice

Go paperless from the outset

Set yourself up with a practice management software to store clinical records and patient details

Set yourself up with [ECLIPSE](#) from the outset

Here's Medicare's [educational guide](#) on ECLIPSE

Set up training with your software provider for you and your staff so that you have the best chance of operating your practice efficiently

Set up your hardware - work with an IT provider to set yourself up with the right PC, scanners, printers, etc. that you'll need to get up and running. Take a look at our [Certified Adviser network](#) to see who you can reach out to in your area

Chapter 6

The patient journey



The patient journey

To expand your practice, you'll need to consider how you develop and nurture strong relationships with GPs and patients.

There are lots of moral, ethical and legal restrictions to keep in mind.

Remember to never:

- ✗ Promise a certain outcome in exchange for using your services
- ✗ Use testimonials in your marketing materials
- ✗ Offer specials and discounts to patients

See the [AMA's Code of Conduct](#) or the [Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency](#) for more do's and don'ts.

Seek the right advice

Some practices work with medical marketing experts to build their social media presence, help them rank higher in Google searches, or create brand collateral like flyers and business cards. While it may not be a top priority for you, engaging a marketing specialist can be helpful for generating business.

Your software should also help you manage the end-to-end relationship with your patients. As an example, you can extract email addresses in Genie to send a newsletter to your patient database in email marketing software like MailChimp.

For inbound marketing, our specialists have had success creating a simple website to raise their digital profile. Having your name, a brief biography, your contact details and a recent photograph of yourself is helpful for patients who want to learn more about you.

Whether a GP receives your flyer in the mail, or a patient is referred to you by a GP, you can expect to be Googled - and you'll build credibility and trust with patients if they can put a face to a name.

Some specialists in our network also ask patients to review them online, hold information sessions for local GPs, pay a visit to local GP's to introduce themselves or send a thank-you note to first-time referrers.

Whatever you do, do it ethically, and do it authentically.



Empower the patient journey

Technology has changed the world, and patients expect digital and real-world experiences with healthcare practitioners to match those experiences in other areas of their lives.

To succeed, you'll need to do everything in your power to ensure your patient has a seamless experience with your practice. Online appointments, SMS updates in the event you're running late, and friendly follow ups with patients after a procedure can all contribute to a positive patient experience.

Other ways to enhance patient experience include:



Comfortable and inviting sitting areas in your practice



Drinks like tea and coffee or water



Mints for the adults and lollipops for the kids



Reading materials or a TV for entertainment in waiting areas



Easy access and adequate parking

Chapter 6

Checklist

Be aware of what you can and can't do from a marketing perspective by reading:

AMA's Code of Conduct Guidelines

**Australian Health Practitioner
Regulation Agency**

Investigate a static website containing your name, biography and contact details, as well as a recent photo – this makes it easier for patients to find you

Investigate holding an information session for local GPs in your area, or visit them individually, so that they know who you are and what you have to offer their patients

Map out the patient experience you want to offer, and include the following in your plans:

Create a comfortable and inviting reception area

Think about refreshments such as a water cooler

Provide useful and relevant reading material for patients as they wait

Ensure easy access and adequate parking for your patients

Ensure there is ample hand sanitiser for your patients (and staff) to use within the reception area

Chapter 7

Your practice as a business



Whether you go out on your own or join a collective of specialists, experts to guide you through the business side of your practice can be the anchor to your business success, in the same way you're the go-to expert for your patients' medical needs.

Here are some people to consider partnering with, now and throughout your professional life:

Accountant: If you don't have an experienced tax accountant already, you'll want to find one before you set up your practice. If you're an Australian Fellow, contact the Institute of Chartered Accountants or CPA Australia for advice.

Some key points:

- 1** Keep your private and business expenses separate
- 2** Have a system for keeping records for tax purposes
- 3** Set up your practice's legal structure
- 4** Know how to manage leasing and ownership of assets
- 5** Ensure superannuation for your staff is properly managed
- 6** Setup your [ABN](#)
- 7** Get advice on how best to structure your personal and business assets to limit liability

Also, talk to your accountant about your exit strategy. While that's not going to be top of mind when you're starting out, there are capital gains implications to think about, so get the right advice early on and keep all possibilities in mind to avoid nasty surprises later.

Banker: Day-to-day payments received in your practice should be deposited into your business account intact. Build a relationship with your bank manager, who can help you setup and manage your business account, business credit card facilities and EFTPOS.

Bookkeeper: While your accountant is an important partner, most of your day-to-day financials, payroll and invoicing will be managed by a bookkeeper, who works with your accountant to ensure your tax payments are lodged correctly, and on time. If your practice manager has bookkeeping skills, you may be able to manage this activity in-house.

Business consultant: A business consultant can help you to get the most out of your practice, manage your super, make good investment decisions, deal with life insurance and make lots of other decisions associated with the success of your practice.

Insurance: Insurance is critical – and there are several different insurance requirements like workers compensation, public liability and medical indemnity to put in place before you open. You may consider hiring an experienced insurance adviser to help you find the best deal for your practice.

Lawyer: A lawyer will help with a wide range of critical business aspects, such as medical compliance (e.g. someone who can help you navigate issues such as Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra) notifications), establishing a business structure, trust and service arrangements, employment and HR matters, property acquisitions, disposals, leasing and much more.

Stay on top of your financials

From a finance perspective, to run a private practice, is to run a business – and if you don't have enough cash flow, your practice will struggle to stay afloat.

Ask yourself: What will my variable costs be? and What do I need to do to make my business viable now, and help it grow in the future?

If you have a loan, make sure repayments are structured to reflect cash flow. Your accountant or financial adviser can help you plan your loans. You may also be able to get government assistance for equipment and staff professional development. Check with the [Department of Human Services](#) or the [Australian Medical Association](#) to find out what support you may be eligible for.

Another consideration for specialists is what to charge. What should your base rate be? How about your gap payment? And what will your charge for private practice patients be? The AMA provides a [schedule of fees](#), to give you some idea of standard charges – we recommend cross-referencing with the fees paid by Medicare and the health funds, in order to set your baseline.



How to manage billing

One of the most important aspects of private practice is billing.

Sort out your Medicare provider number:

If you're going to practice out of more than one location, including different hospitals, you'll need a [separate provider number](#) for each location. Locally trained doctors usually obtain their provider number in a few weeks, but if you have overseas qualifications, start the process as soon as you can, because you can't see patients without it and the process can take a few months.

Claims through Medicare:

Medicare billing, claims and payments can be complex, although the [Department of Human Services](#) does offer support to doctors. The department also has detailed information on its website about [items and rules around the Medicare Benefits Scheme \(MBS\)](#) and will send providers email advice if requested. The website clearly lays out everything you need to know including inappropriate or incorrect claiming, the consequences of noncompliance and many more resources. It's important to get this right to avoid being audited or having to repay incorrect Medicare benefits paid to you.

Private health funds:

It's important to make sure you are registered with each health fund before you get started. For example, the [Australian Health Service Alliance \(AHSa\)](#) is an umbrella group for nearly 30 different funds. You'll also need to make sure you have the right agreement in place. Health funds typically have either a "no-gap" fund or a known-gap fund. Work out which is right for your practice.

Fee schedules:

When choosing medical software, it's important to know how frequently the fee schedules are updated and how long after they are released they become available in your software. Regularly updating the fee schedules is important not only because it includes updates to fees but also adjustments to claimable items. Good practice management software will also contain basic billing rules to automate some of the checks and help you along the way for example, both Genie and Gentu will apply the multiple item rule and calculate assistant fees for you.

Are your referrals up to date?

To get paid, you must have valid and up-to-date referrals. There are strict guidelines to adhere to, including that new referrals shouldn't be requested when a current one is still active. There are some instances where this is acceptable, for example - if the patient has a new condition and is being treated by the same specialist, or the referring doctor considers a review of the patient is needed (so long as the patient hasn't been seen by the specialist for the past nine months). Any good practice management software will help you manage your referrals, and alert you if a referral is out of date.

Stay on top of invoicing:

Again, a good quality practice management solution will show you who has been invoiced, who hasn't, and run reports to identify billing gaps. It's important to stay on top of billing and to claim the maximum allowed, while ensuring you are in compliance with the MBS.

We work with trusted partners who make up our [**Certified Adviser**](#) program who can assist you in a number of these areas.

Chapter 7

Checklist

Building your trusted network:

An **Accountant** who will advise you on:

- Keeping your private and business expenses separate
- Having a system for keeping records for tax purposes
- Setting up your practice's legal structure
- Knowing how to manage leasing and ownership of assets
- Ensuring superannuation for your staff is properly managed
- Your **ABN**
- Your exit strategy – what do you need to set up now in order for a smooth transition out of private practice when the time comes

Banker

Bookkeeper

Business Consultant

Insurance Provider

Lawyer

- One experienced with medical compliance laws
- Staying on top of your financials
- Check the **Department of Human Services** and the **Australian Medical Association** to see if you're eligible for any government assistance in terms of equipment or staff professional development
 - Establish the rate you will charge for your services
 - You can cross reference with the AMA's **schedule of fees** and the fee paid by Medicare and the Health Funds
- How to Manage Billing
- Attaining a **Medicare Provider Number**
 - If you're going to practice out of more than one location, including different hospitals, you'll need a separate provider number for each location

Get set up to make claims through Medicare

- In particular, familiarise yourself with the items and rules around **Medicare Benefits Scheme** (MBS)
- Register with each of the private health funds before you get started
- The **Australian Health Service Alliance** is an umbrella group for nearly 30 different funds, it's a great place to start
- Make sure you have the right agreement in place (health funds typically have either a no-gap or a known-gap fund. Work out which is right for your practice as well as your private fees).

Chapter 8

Referrals: building relationships with GP's



One of the most important relationships you'll manage in private practice is with local GPs. It's their referrals that allow you to expand your patient base. Established private practice specialists stress the importance of GP relationships, especially when you're starting out. To build rapport, it's important to reach out to GPs in the area and to build a trusted network.

The communication and support runs both ways. Specialists in private practice suggest sharing your expertise with them. Try to arrange a session on your specialty to GPs to expand their knowledge of your field and build their trust in your skills. If you work in public hospitals, build awareness with other doctors in the hospital, including in other specialties.

Consider other ways to build your relationships, for example:



Send newsletters or some form of regular communications to your GP network so your practice stays front of mind



Once you've seen a GP's patient, give the referring doctor a call to fill them in on the consult. If a phone call isn't practical, send an electronic letter to keep the GP informed and suggest a course of action. This ensures the GP is prepared to discuss the outcome of their consult with the patient.



Make it easy for them to reach you, by giving them your mobile number so that you're easily contactable.



Define your unique selling points and promote them to GP's

Deep insights into your referrals

On the flip side of referral generation is understanding where referrals are coming from. Which GPs are referring you to their patients? How often do they refer you? And what do those referrals mean to your practice, financially and in terms of building your reputation?

One of the great benefits of practice management software like Genie and Gentu is that you can see where your main referrals are coming from - including the name of the doctor, their location, the number of referrals over time and amount of revenue generated from those referrals. This data is easily accessible, and easy to read and interpret.

So how can it help you manage your referrals?

- 1** If you know who is referring, you can focus on fostering existing relationships, which generally leads to more repeat referrals over time
- 2** Referrals are revenue so why not send out thank you notes and gifts to nurture those GP relationships?
- 3** Referral sources can guide your business decisions and help you grow your business

If GPs have sent you a lot of referrals, you could consider recommending those GPs to your patients, so the benefits flow both ways.

Relationships with other specialists can help you build your network and expand your patient base too.

When working with GPs, make sure you answer your phone and respond to their queries. One practice we spoke to warned that specialists who use answering services can be at a disadvantage. For example, if a GP refers a specialist and that specialist isn't quick to respond to a patient inquiry, it can sour the relationship. One practice manager says if patients call back to complain that the specialist didn't return their call, the GP practice will no longer refer that specialist.

It pays to be mindful of your interactions with others and the flow-on implications to your practice.



Chapter 8

Checklist

Set up and maintain your referral base, keeping in mind the following:



Introducing yourself through email, a letter, or an information night where you can present your work to them

Send newsletters or some form of regular update to your GP network so they're regularly reminded of your practice

Once you've seen a GP's patient, phone that doctor to let them know what happened during the consult. If phone calls aren't practical with your schedule, then send a prompt electronic letter updating the GP on what happened in the consult and the next course of action to be taken. This ensures when their patient comes back to see them, they are prepared and able to discuss the outcome with the patient. They will appreciate the care you show their patients and will be more likely to refer future patients.

Make it easy for them to reach you, by giving them your mobile number so that you're easily contactable.

Define what your unique selling points are as a specialist and promote these to the GP's



Chapter 9

Prevent burnout

Patients are your top priority, but it's important to care for your own health and wellbeing. Burnout is an all-too-common problem among medical professionals - who are exposed to multiple stress factors at work, every day. According to a [health survey from Beyond Blue](#) (June 2019), doctors reported much higher rates of psychological stress and suicidal thoughts compared with other professionals and the Australian public overall, particularly among doctors under the age of 30. Yet according to the Royal Australasian College of Physicians only [31% of doctors have their own General Practitioner.](#)

Use simple strategies to manage stress: get some exercise, take time out to relax and get enough sleep. For those new to private practice, the experience of Dr Latona, a Genie Solutions customer and cardiologist, may be familiar.

He says he was "taught to be a doctor, not a businessman".


So how can you create an environment that prevents burnout and supports the wellbeing of you and your staff?

An open culture at work is important. Taking time to meet with your staff and talk about issues you all face can help to build a support network within your practice – and one that will benefit you, your staff and your patients.


If circumstances allow it, you might want to start out with just a couple of days of private practice a week. That's the advice Genie Solutions customer and surgeon, Dr Kunjuran, gave when we [interviewed](#) her about stress management.


Other valuable coping strategies include:

 Set realistic financial expectations early on

 Learn from others in private practice

 Don't be afraid to ask for help

 Avoid taking work home with you

 Schedule regular breaks

One fear that doctors may have is that their own health issue may result in a mandatory notification. To address these concerns, [AHPRA has been changing the requirements](#) around mandatory notifications.

Where to find help

If you are feeling overwhelmed or would like help with managing your own health, it's important to know that there are many different support networks available. These include:



The [Doctors' Health Advisery Services](#), which aims to ensure all practitioners have access to health care, provides a dedicated service seven days a week and a non-emergency help line. DHAS also offers a [checklist](#) of steps to take for mental and physical well-being. While DHAS is a NSW and ACT initiative, there are either DHAS branches in other states and territories, or [other support networks](#), which are listed on the DHAS website.



[Doctors' Health SA](#) is focused on improving the health of doctors and medical students and runs several events and conferences throughout the year. A profession-only general practitioner clinic is offered in the Adelaide CBD. The non-profit organisation has also established a [Northern Territory service](#).



[DRS4DRS](#) is a website for medical professionals and medical students that coordinates health programs for doctors, advocates for their wellbeing and generally provides a supportive community nationwide.



The RACP offers a number of services, including the [RACP Support Program](#), which is an independent 24-hour help line; [steps to help colleagues](#) or medical practitioner friends; a list of [resources and support services](#) for health professionals; and a section for [members' stories](#) to help others on their own journey.



[Beyond Blue](#) is a non-profit organisation that seeks to help those struggling with anxiety and depression. A dedicated [Doctors' Mental Health Program](#) was established in 2009 to identify the issues affecting mental health in doctors and medical students and to encourage them to seek help. Beyond Blue can be reached on **1300 224 636**.



[Lifeline](#) provides 24-hour telephone support across the country for Australians experiencing a personal crisis. Anyone in Australia experiencing a crisis is encouraged to call Lifeline on **13 11 14** with a suicide back-up service on **1300 659 467**.

So, that's it from us!

We thank you for taking on a role that directly contributes to positive health outcomes in the world, and for considering us to be your partner on the journey.

The path ahead may be stressful, but it's also exhilarating.

If you're ever in doubt, just give us a call - we (clearly) love to talk, but we love to listen too.

Kind Regards,

The team at Genie Solutions



Appendix and Resources

Chapter	Resource	Link
2	Certified Adviser Program	https://www.geniesolutionssoftware.com.au/certified-adviser-program
3	Australasian Health Infrastructure Alliance	https://healthfacilityguidelines.com.au/australasian-health-infrastructure-alliance
	Certified Adviser Program	https://www.geniesolutionssoftware.com.au/certified-adviser-program
	Australian National Privacy Principles	https://www.oaic.gov.au/privacy/australian-privacy-principles/
4	Certified Adviser Program	https://www.geniesolutionssoftware.com.au/certified-adviser-program
	Australian Association of Practice Management	https://www.aapm.org.au/Advertising/Positions-Vacant
	Seek	https://www.seek.com.au/
	Indeed	https://au.indeed.com/
	Australian Medical Association	https://ama.com.au/article/ama-guide-employment-law-medical-practices
	National Employment Standard	https://www.fairwork.gov.au/employee-entitlements/national-employment-standards

Chapter	Resource	Link
4	AMA advanced courses for practice staff	https://www.amatraining.edu.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/09/AMA-Diploma-of-Practice-Management-Brochure.pdf
5	ECLIPSE Guide from Medicare	https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/organisations/health-professionals/topics/education-guide-register-medicare-online-and-eclipse-claiming/32276
	Certified Adviser Program	https://www.geniesolutionssoftware.com.au/certified-adviser-program
	AWS Security and Compliance Practices	https://docs.aws.amazon.com/whitepapers/latest/aws-overview/security-and-compliance.html
6	AMA's Code of Conduct	https://ama.com.au/sites/default/files/documents/AMC_Code_of_Conduct_July_2009.pdf
	Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency	https://www.ahpra.gov.au/
	Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) advertising regulated health services	https://www.ahpra.gov.au/Publications/Advertising-resources/Legislation-guidelines/Advertising-guidelines.aspx
7	Australian Business Number	https://www.abr.gov.au/business-super-funds-charities/applying-abn
	Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (Ahpra) Notifications	https://www.ahpra.gov.au/Notifications.aspx
	Department of Human Services	https://www.servicesaustralia.gov.au/
	Australian Medical Association	https://ama.com.au/

Chapter	Resource	Link
7	AMA Schedule of Fees	https://feelist.ama.com.au/
	Medicare Provider Number	https://www.humanservices.gov.au/organisations/health-professionals/services/medicare/medicare-benefits-health-professionals/apply-medicare-provider-number/applying-medicare-provider-number
	Department of Human Services	http://www.mbsonline.gov.au/internet/mbsonline/publishing.nsf/Content/MBS-interpretation
	Medicare Benefits Scheme (MBS)	https://www1.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/billing-accurately-medicare
	Australian Health Service Alliance (AHSA) Superannuation Fund List	https://www.ahsa.com.au/web/fundlist
	Certified Adviser Program	https://www.geniesolutionssoftware.com.au/certified-adviser-program
	The Australian Competition and Consumer Commission information on setting fees	https://www.accc.gov.au/business/industry-associations-professional-services/medical-professionals/fee-setting-by-medical-professionals
	Medicare Benefits Schedule: Interpretations and Updates to the legislation	http://www.mbsonline.gov.au/internet/mbsonline/publishing.nsf/Content/MBS-interpretation
	Medicare Benefits Schedule: Interpretations and Updates to the legislation	http://www.mbsonline.gov.au/internet/mbsonline/publishing.nsf/Content/Downloads-202001
	Referring and requesting Medicare Services	https://www.humanservices.gov.au/organisations/health-professionals/subjects/referring-and-requesting-medicare-services
9	Medicare Contact Details	Call 132 150 or email medicare.prov@humanservices.gov.au
	Beyond Blue National Mental Health Survey of Doctors and Medical Students	https://www.beyondblue.org.au/docs/default-source/research-project-files/bl1132-report---nmhdmss-full-report_web
	RACP Health of Doctors Position Statement	https://www.racp.edu.au/docs/default-source/advocacy-library/pa-pos-health-of-doctors-2013.pdf

Chapter	Resource	Link
9	Genie Solutions Blog 'How to avoid burnout in private practice'	https://www.geniesolutionssoftware.com.au/how-to-avoid-burnout-in-private-practice
	Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency Mandatory Notifications	https://www.ahpra.gov.au/Notifications/mandatorynotifications.aspx
	Doctors' Health Advisory Services	http://www.dhas.org.au/
	Doctors' Health Advisory Services Checklist for Mental & Physical Well-being	http://www.dhas.org.au/wellbeing/wellbeing.html
	Doctors' Health Advisory Services Contact Details	http://www.dhas.org.au/contact/contact-dhas-in-other-states-territories-and-new-zealand.html
	Doctors' Health SA	https://www.doctorshealthsa.com.au/
	Doctor's Health NT	http://doctorshealthnt.com.au/
	DRS4DRS	https://www.drs4drs.com.au/
	RACP Support Program	https://www.racp.edu.au/fellows/physician-health-and-wellbeing/i-need-support/racp-support-program https://www.racp.edu.au/fellows/physician-health-and-wellbeing/i-want-to-offer-support https://www.racp.edu.au/fellows/physician-health-and-wellbeing/resources https://www.racp.edu.au/fellows/physician-health-and-wellbeing/members-stories
	Beyond Blue	https://www.beyondblue.org.au/get-support/national-help-lines-and-websites and 1300 224 636
	Beyond Blue Doctors' Mental Health Program	https://www.beyondblue.org.au/media/news/news/2016/09/22/doctors-mental-health-program-gaining-ground
	Lifeline	https://www.lifeline.org.au/ and 13 11 14 or 1300 659 467

Chapter	Resource	Link
N/A	Security with desktop software	https://www.geniesolutionssoftware.com.au/how-to-keep-your-desktop-software-secure
	Security on the cloud	https://www.geniesolutionssoftware.com.au/how-your-data-is-protected-in-the-cloud
	Tips for choosing the right practice management software	https://www.geniesolutionssoftware.com.au/tips-for-choosing-the-right-practice-management-software
	Are you ready to go it alone?	https://www.geniesolutionssoftware.com.au/wp-content/uploads/2019/02/Genie-Solutions-Are-you-ready-to-go-it-alone.pdf

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