

1. Introduction

A survey was sent to all opticians in June 2013 prior to the release of the Ophthalmic Claim System (OCS), with the aim of assessing IT capacity within practices and attitudes towards online claim submission and reporting.

OCS was piloted by 13 practices from October 2013 to March 2014. Following a feedback and performance analysis of the pilot, the system was rolled out to all practices who wanted to avail of it.

Given it is now approximately 18 months since the system was made available to all practices, FPS wanted to issue another survey to measure attitudes towards OCS and identify potential areas of improvement.

This survey was sent to all optometry practices in Northern Ireland. There were two aims of the survey:

- a) Assess the levels of user satisfaction for practices submitting claims on OCS
- b) Identify possible barriers deterring practices from not using OCS

2. Methodology

The survey was sent out with an invitation letter to all 266 ophthalmic practices in Northern Ireland. There was also a Survey Monkey URL given in the letter to allow respondents to complete the survey online if they preferred. There were a total of 103 respondents to this survey, representing a response rate of approximately 39%.

The survey was comprised of four sections. Section A was completed by all 103 respondents, with question 7 determining whether the respondent proceeded to fill in Section B (for users submitting claims via OCS) or Section C (for those not submitting claims via OCS). Section D was optional for all respondents.

Section 3 of this report shows a breakdown and explanation for each survey question. Section 4 summarises the main findings and recommendations for action.

3. Results

Questions 1, 2 & 3

The first three questions were not used to analyse the findings of the survey, but to provide a unique identifier of each response using the name of respondent, practice code and practice name.

Question 4

103 survey respondents were asked if their practice uses a practice management system and the results were noted.

Questions 5 & 6

Of the 103 survey respondents asked if their practice has dedicated IT support:

- 57% answered “yes” (59 respondents)
- 43% answered “no” (44 respondents)

The 59 practices answering “yes” were asked to name their IT support company and the results were noted.

Question 7

As of the ophthalmic payment made at the end of October 2015, 61% of practices submitted claims on OCS and 39% submitted paper claims.

Of the 103 total survey respondents:

- 75% reported using OCS for claim submission (77 respondents)
- 25% reported not using OCS for claim submission (26 respondents)

The 77 respondents replying “yes” were asked to proceed to complete questions 8 to 16 of the survey concerning their opinions of OCS.

The 26 respondents replying “no” were asked to skip questions 8 to 16 and proceed directly to question 17 to identify their reasons for not using OCS for claim submission.

Question 8

11 respondents answered they “did not avail of any training” (14% of survey respondents using OCS). As OCS training was not mandatory to enable online claim submission, these practices were happy to proceed with claim submission guided by the user manual and phoning the OCS helpdesk if required.

Of the remaining 66 survey respondents using OCS for claim submission that did avail of the training and were asked to rate it:

- 24% answered “extremely helpful” (16 respondents)
- 64% answered “helpful” (42 respondents)
- 9% answered “neutral” (6 respondents)
- 3% answered “unhelpful” (2 respondents)
- 0% answered “extremely unhelpful” (0 respondents)

All respondents could offer comment or feedback on the training in question 18 if desired.

Question 9

Of the 77 survey respondents submitting claims on OCS who were asked to rate the ease of claim submission on OCS:

- 47% answered “extremely easy” (36 respondents)
- 47% answered “easy” (36 respondents)
- 6% answered “neutral” (5 respondents)
- 0% answered “difficult” or “extremely difficult” (0 respondents)

Question 10

Of the 77 survey respondents submitting claims on OCS who were asked to rate the speed of the claiming process on OCS:

- 40% answered “extremely quick” (31 respondents)
- 44% answered “quick” (34 respondents)
- 9% answered “neutral” (7 respondents)
- 5% answered “slow” (4 respondents)
- 1% answered “extremely slow” (1 respondent)

Question 11

Of the 77 survey respondents submitting claims on OCS who were asked if OCS had improved the efficiency of the claiming process:

- 79% answered “yes” (61 respondents)
- 4% answered “no” (3 respondents)
- 17% answered “not sure” (13 respondents)

Question 12

Of the 77 survey respondents submitting claims on OCS who were asked to rate the OCS Reports feature:

- 21% answered “extremely useful” (16 respondents)
- 60% answered “useful” (46 respondents)
- 15% answered “neutral” (12 respondents)
- 1% answered “unhelpful” (1 respondent)
- 3% answered “extremely unhelpful” (2 respondents)

Question 13

Of the 77 survey respondents submitting claims on OCS who were asked to rate the OCS helpdesk:

- 40% answered “extremely helpful” (31 respondents)
- 51% answered “helpful” (39 respondents)
- 6% answered “neutral” (5 respondents)
- 1% answered “unhelpful” (1 respondents)
- 0% answered “extremely unhelpful” (0 respondents)
- 1% answered “I haven’t used it” (1 respondent)

Question 14

Of the 77 survey respondents submitting claims on OCS who were asked if they consult the OCS User Manual before calling the helpdesk 56% answered “yes” (43 respondents) and 44% answered “no” (34 respondents).

Question 15

Of the 77 survey respondents submitting claims on OCS who were asked to rate the OCS user manual:

- 5% answered “extremely helpful” (4 respondents)
- 47% answered “helpful” (36 respondents)
- 19% answered “neutral” (15 respondents)
- 5% answered “unhelpful” (4 respondents)
- 0% answered “extremely unhelpful” (0 respondents)
- 23% answered “I haven’t used it” (18 respondents)

Question 16

Of the 77 survey respondents submitting claims on OCS who were asked to rate the overall level of satisfaction with OCS within their practice:

- 38% answered “extremely satisfied” (29 respondents)
- 53% answered “satisfied” (41 respondents)
- 5% answered “neutral” (4 respondents)
- 4% answered “unsatisfied” (3 respondents)
- 0% answered “extremely unsatisfied” (0 respondents)

Question 17

Question 17 asked respondents to answer “Please briefly describe any concerns or issues which are deterring you from using OCS for claim submission”. All 26 respondents who answered “no” to question 7 were required to answer this question.

Each practice was free to write as many reasons as they wished, thus some respondents had only one comment in their response whilst others provided several comments. These were categorised and counted as follows:

Reason	Count
Double keying / speed of keying / bulk upload	7
No PC / Internet	6
Corporate network / policy	4
PC upgrade	3
Design of OCS	3
Storage of OCSPR forms	2
Training / IT skills	2
Cost	1
Total	28

Some of these factors are beyond BSO control, for example: some practices not having PCs or Internet; practices using outdated or unsupported operating systems on their PCs; being restricted by a corporate network or policy; or their practice management software supplier not supporting the bulk upload feature or charging a fee for this. However BSO has provided advice and support to contractors to resolve these issues where possible, and will continue trying to encourage suppliers to support the bulk upload feature.

Question 18

Question 18 asked respondents to answer “Please include any other comments or feedback below”.

This question was optional for all 103 respondents. 59 respondents chose to provide an answer to this question. 49 of these responses were from practices submitting claims using OCS.

A few of the responses included queries or statements that suggest the practices have misunderstood some aspect of online claim submission. These practices will be contacted to explain and resolve these issues where possible.

Question 19

This question was mandatory for all respondents to complete. When all 103 respondents were asked to indicate if they would be willing to be contacted by BSO for additional feedback or to follow up on any issues reported:

- 66% answered “yes” (68 respondents).
- 33% answered “no” (35 respondents).

Issues can be followed up with individual practices that have ticked the box in this question if required. This may represent an opportunity to explain issues or procedures in relation to OCS that respondents may have misunderstood. It also offers BSO a chance to explore further if any previously unidentified bugs or issues have been flagged up by respondents to the survey. A summary of the survey results will be communicated to all ophthalmic practices and some of the common questions or misconceptions may be addressed via this method.

4. Discussion and Conclusion

4.1. Response Rate

103 of a total 266 practices completed the OCS survey, providing a satisfactory 39% response rate. Respondents were given the options of postal or online return. It is of note that although 75% of respondents were using OCS for claim submission, only 34% of respondents submitted their response to the survey online. This gives an indication of the instinctive preference for paper and postal communication amongst many contractors, even those now using OCS.

4.2. Practice PC Setup & Software

Of the 103 respondents to the OCS survey:

- 75% reporting submitting claims online on OCS
- 74% of practices did not report a dedicated IT support arrangement
- 67% of practices report using a practice management system

This indicates a slightly higher response rate from practices submitting claims on OCS, who represent 61% of the overall practice population. The challenge of implementing the rollout of OCS is evidenced with 74% of practices reporting no dedicated IT support arrangement. The fact that 67% of the total population use a practice management system demonstrates there is a clear potential benefit of promoting and facilitating the usage of the bulk upload feature to reduce manual input from practices.

4.3. Attitudes to OCS among users

A number of key figures obtained in the OCS survey provide strong evidence of positive attitudes to OCS and provide some measure of success of the implementation of the system. A few key problems, concerns and potential improvements were also identified. Of the 77 respondents submitting claims on OCS:

- 88% rated the training as “helpful” or “extremely helpful”
- 94% rated the ease of online claim submission as “easy” or “extremely easy”
- 84% rated the speed of online claim submission as “quick” or “extremely quick”
- 79% agreed this has improved the efficiency of the claiming process
- 81% rated the Reports function as “useful” or “extremely useful”
- 91% rated the helpdesk as “helpful” or “extremely helpful”

- 52% rated the user manual “helpful” or “extremely helpful”
- 91% rated the overall opinion within the practice as “satisfied” or “extremely satisfied”

There is clear potential to improve the OCS user manual and to ensure the bugs affecting the Reports function are addressed to improve the user experience. The usage and storage of the OCSPR form remains another significant concern for a number of respondents. Some of the suggestions for the layout of the form will be considered when drafting the second version. In the long-term, consideration will be given to other potential methods of capturing the patient’s signature, for example the use of digital signature pads.

4.4. Attitudes to OCS among non-users

Of the 26 survey respondents who do not submit claims on OCS, a variety of reasons were cited in response to question 17 as the reason for staying with paper claim submission. These results demonstrate that there are still some significant barriers in convincing non-users to make the switch to online claim submission, which will be addressed where possible.

4.5. General comments and feedback

One common issue mentioned which could be addressed by BSO / HSCB over the long-term is the OCSPR form. Some practices have offered feedback on the design of the form itself, but a number of practices have expressed concern about having to fill in and store a large quantity of paper forms, particularly when a number have invested time and money in reducing paper storage in their practices. This remains a significant complaint and concern for practices that are using OCS for claim submission. BSO will continue to investigate digital signature solutions which may alleviate these concerns.

A number of practices, OCS users and non-users, have expressed interest in using the Bulk Upload feature. This could significantly reduce the amount of time spent on manual claim submission for any practices already inputting patient information into a practice management system. BSO have this function built into OCS but it is not currently enabled, until a supplier is willing to incorporate functionality into their system and this can be tested and verified for payment. The relevant specifications have been sent to a number of practices and suppliers, but as yet none have stated they will facilitate it. Efforts will continue to encourage implementation of Bulk Upload.

There are a number of bugs affecting the smooth operation of OCS, such as Sight Test claims always requiring a Voucher code to be input when there is no Voucher

being claimed, or the incorrect display of the Reports page. BSO have been aware of a number of these bugs for some time, but funding will be required to change OCS to resolve most of them. The OCS user manual should be updated to ensure it covers as many areas as possible and practices should be encouraged to consult it before ringing the OCS Helpdesk.

The results of the survey suggest that a number of these issues can and should be addressed in the coming months, which will help improve user satisfaction as well as reducing the barriers discouraging practices submitting paper claims from moving to OCS submission.