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A CLIENT STORY

How Southern Cross Health Insurance is using Patient Feedback to celebrate exceptional surgeons and boost morale

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Enhancing motivation by recognising surgical excellence.

In the fast-paced world of healthcare, recognition is often in short supply. Southern Cross Health Insurance, a leading private health insurer in New Zealand, is working to change that with its Provider Recognition Certificates Programme - an initiative designed to celebrate and acknowledge outstanding surgical consultants based on real patient feedback.

Since its inception, this programme has become a powerful way to highlight excellence in surgical care and reinforce a positive feedback culture in the medical community.

“We believe healthcare providers like to hear patient feedback as a strong signal of their outstanding professionalism” – Dr Stephen Child
Chief Medical Officer of Southern Cross Health Insurance

How the programme works

Southern Cross Health Insurance collects patient-reported outcomes and experiences at two key points in the surgical journey - before surgery and three months post-surgery. The surveys measure both surgical outcomes and doctor-patient interactions, providing a holistic view of the care experience. Additionally, surveying patients who visit diagnostic medical specialists 24 hours after their first visit.

Surgeons who consistently receive positive patient feedback are identified through this data.

Twice a year, certificates and personalised letters of commendation are sent to the highest-performing specialists. Now embarking on its tenth round, over 200 certificates have been awarded to date.

"Over this time period of six months, you have consistently amassed positive reviews... our members have had positive experiences with you and therefore we want to thank you," says Rudo Greissworth

Example of certificate template:



Small but powerful

While the certificates serve as a symbol of excellence, they've also had a much broader impact than initially expected. The response from the medical community has been overwhelmingly positive:

Surgeons feel genuinely appreciated

"Some providers told us this was the first time they had ever felt truly thanked by Southern Cross as an insurer. Most interactions tend to be administrative, so this was a welcome surprise." Rudo

Practice teams celebrate together

"One practice team was so delighted to receive the certificate that they threw a mini celebration - decorating the office with balloons and making it a shared moment of pride." Rudo

"All of them ask for their data and I provide gathered-up summaries as well... they say that having this information helps them understand their practice better." - Rudo Greissworth, Patient Insights Lead

Encouraging self-reflection and engagement

"Doctors are asking for more insights into their feedback. They want to understand what their patients are saying and how they can use it for their ongoing medical education and accreditation." Rudo



From criticism to inspiration

Beyond recognising excellence, the Provider Recognition Certificates Programme is helping shift the culture around feedback. Traditionally, feedback in healthcare has often been viewed as a watchdog tool - used to highlight complaints or identify areas of concern. Southern Cross is flipping the narrative, using patient feedback to celebrate and inspire providers instead.

"There's still so much complexity around feedback as a weapon... We wanted to create touchpoints that were couched in a positive mindset and a gratitude mindset towards our providers, from our members." - Rudo

By using survey responses to directly acknowledge specialists, Southern Cross is ensuring that positive patient voices are heard and valued.

The programme also taps into an important motivator for patients - many fill out surveys as a way to pay it forward, hoping that their feedback will help future patients receive excellent care.

"There's so much messaging around, I want to pay it forward. I want someone to have as good an experience, if not better." - Rudo

Building stronger provider relationships

The initiative has also helped strengthen the connection between Southern Cross and its affiliated Provider network.

"There's always the interface between us and the providers, so much about the business... It's just nice to reinsert the patient into that conversation as much as possible." - Rudo

By incorporating Southern Cross partnership managers into the delivery of the certificates, the programme has become another touchpoint for relationship-building, adding a meaningful layer of interaction beyond the usual commercial discussions.

Keeping up momentum

With the success of the Provider Recognition Certificates Programme, Southern Cross is looking at ways to further enhance the initiative:

- **Framing certificates for display** - to make the recognition even more meaningful, future rounds will include framed certificates that providers can proudly showcase in their practices.
- **Expanding feedback insights** - providing more structured bespoke reports for providers to help them better understand and act on their patient feedback.
- **Continuing the positive momentum** - ensuring that the programme remains a sustainable, long-term part of how Southern Cross recognises excellence in healthcare.

With every certificate awarded, Southern Cross Health Insurance is reinforcing a culture of excellence, appreciation, and continuous improvement - one provider at a time.

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United Kingdom

0800 098 8525

Australia

1800 765 924

New Zealand

0800 157 258

hello@cemplicity.com

cemplicity.com