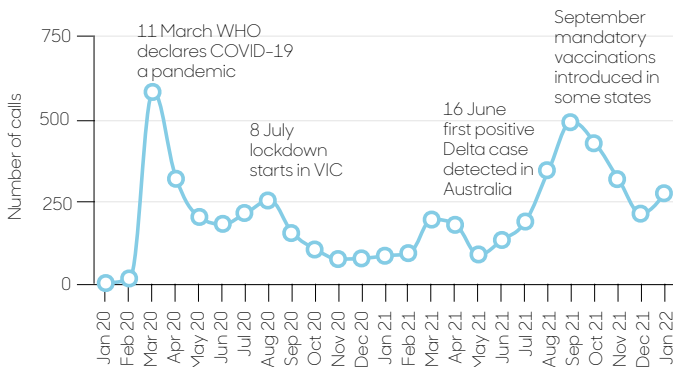


Claims, complaints and medico-legal queries COVID-19

Medico-legal calls and common queries

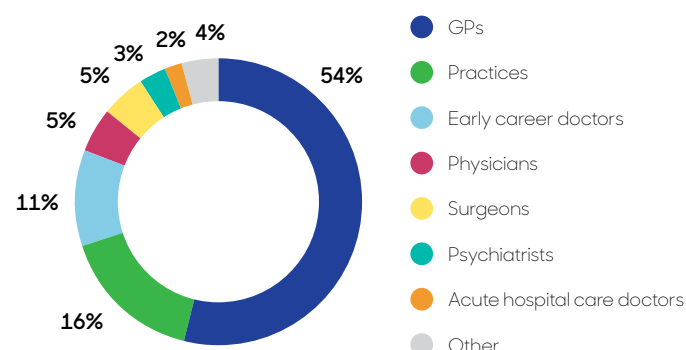
Since the pandemic began our Medico-legal Advisory Service (MLAS) has responded to over 5,000 member and practice calls about COVID-19. Calls were highest at the start of the pandemic and in September 2021 when mask/vaccination mandates were introduced during the Delta wave.



The most common queries related to:

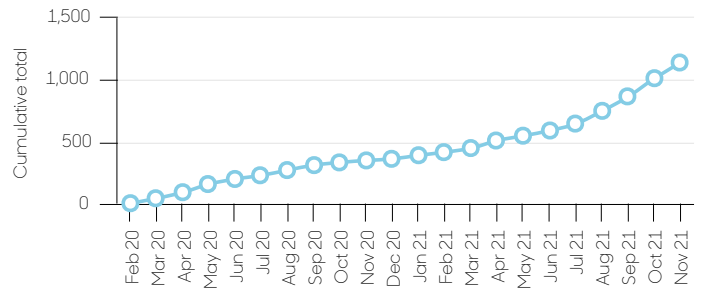
- 1. Vaccination** e.g. rules, age thresholds, brands, boosters, parental disputes about consent, expiry of doses, informed consent.
- 2. Medical certificates** e.g. requests for vaccine exemptions, mask exemptions, return to work clearances, letters to support working from home.
- 3. Complaints and incidents** e.g. patient complaints for declining vaccine exemptions or mask exemptions, being asked to follow COVIDSafe protocols, not being seen face-to-face, not being seen in a consult room, suspicious exemption certificates, members seeking to end doctor-patient relationships with patients who are aggressive or not following COVIDSafe protocols.
- 4. Employment issues** e.g. managing unvaccinated staff or staff with mask exemptions, contract variations, mandatory vaccination.
- 5. Practice management** e.g. advice on COVIDSafe policies, managing unvaccinated patients, patients with COVID-19 or patients not wearing a mask.

The majority of calls were from:

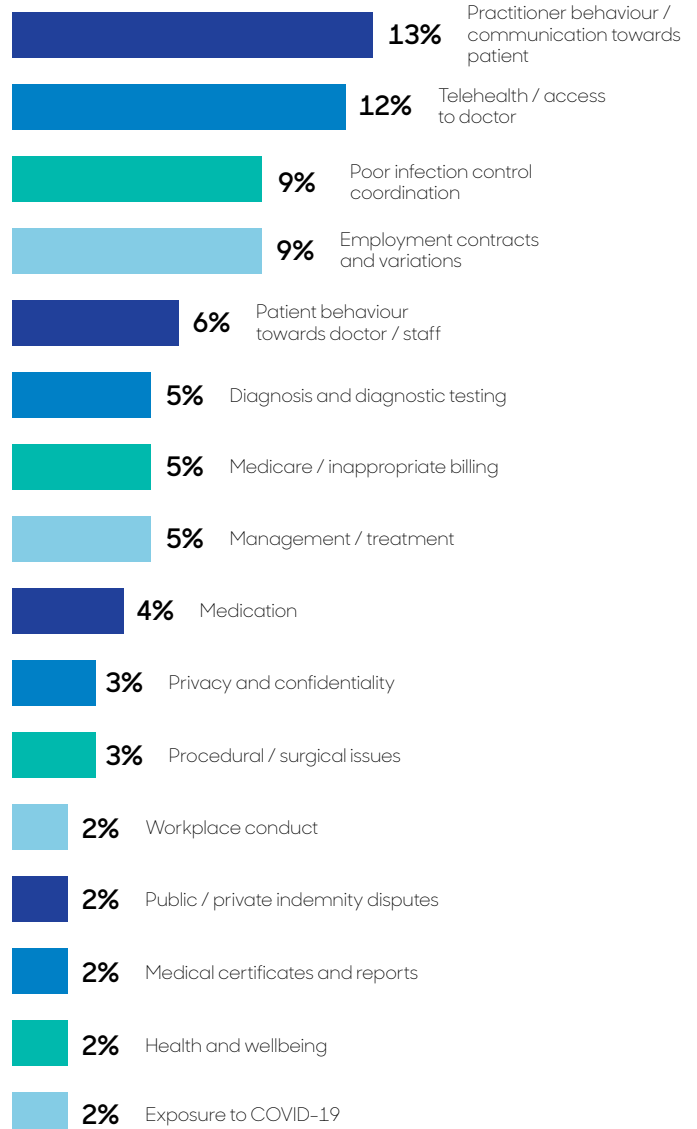


Claims and notifications of incidents

We have had approximately 1,200 notifications and claims related to COVID-19 since the start of the pandemic.



The most common allegations / issues raised were:



* Data source: Avant MLAS calls 1 January 2020 to 27 January 2022

* Data source: Avant COVID-19 coded claims data to end of November 2021

Our other COVID-19 work

In addition to MLAS and claims assistance, since March 2020:

- We advocated to government on a range of issues. We attended regular meetings with the Australian Government Department of Health, the Australian Technical Advisory Group on Immunisation (ATAGI), Medicare and medical colleges and associations, including over 100 meetings with the COVID-19 GP peak body to identify and resolve issues related to COVID-19.
- We updated you and answered many of your questions in webinars. We hosted over 27 COVID-19-focused webinars for members and participated in 33 webinars with external partners. In total, the audience from these events (including on-demand views) was 17,326 doctors and practice staff.
- We published frequently asked questions (FAQs) to anticipate or respond to concerns faced by members and practices. These questions are continually reviewed and updated, and there are currently over 100 COVID-19 FAQs available on the Avant website. These have been referred to by Ahpra and the Medical Board as a reputable source of medico-legal information. Since the COVID-19 pandemic began the site has had over 160,000 views.
- We provided members with clarity and reassurance about their indemnity coverage (including cover for administering vaccines).

We have published numerous articles focused on COVID-19 – some of our most popular were:

- New coronavirus Medicare telehealth item numbers
avant.org.au/news/new-coronavirus-medicare-telehealth-item-numbers
- Clarity on providing medical certificates during COVID-19
avant.org.au/news/clarity-on-providing-medical-certificates-during-covid-19
- Mandatory face covering – The medico-legal issues
avant.org.au/news/mandatory-face-covering-the-medico-legal-issues

Glossary

Claims refers to patient claims for compensation / civil claims, formal complaints to regulators, e.g. Ahpra, employment disputes and other claim types such as Medicare audits.

Notifications refers to notifications and notices of incidents or adverse events which may lead to a formal claim or complaint.

Resources

If you have a question about COVID-19 or you receive a claim or complaint, contact us on **1800 128 268** for expert medico-legal advice on how to respond – available 24/7 in emergencies.

For updates on our medico-legal advice for members regarding COVID-19, visit our COVID-19 FAQs page – avant.org.au/covid-19

For any queries on this analysis, please contact us at research@avant.org.au



For more information on our educational materials, visit the Avant Learning Centre, avant.org.au/avant-learning-centre, where you will find articles, case studies, podcasts, webinars, videos, factsheets and many other resources.

avant.org.au | 1800 128 268



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