

# DIGITAL HEALTH UPDATE | December

Welcome to the final edition of the Allied Health Professions Australia (AHPA) digital update for allied health practitioners in 2016. This update covers a range of digital health activities undertaken by AHPA and its members. We encourage you to get in touch with questions or comments via [comms@ahpa.com.au](mailto:comms@ahpa.com.au).

## Latest News and Updates

### My Health Record project update

The recent My Health Record consumer participation trials in Queensland, New South Wales, Victoria and Western Australia have now formally finished. Each trial has been carefully evaluated to provide the government with a detailed understanding of the needs of consumers and health professionals using the system. AHPA's own project is almost complete, having focused on use of My Health Record by the allied health sector. AHPA has provided recommendations to government, focused on improving the accessibility of the system, streamlining the registration process and defining the key settings in which allied health practitioners are likely to gain benefit from access to My Health Record. The Australian government will now consider the findings of the trials and the recommendations made as it develops a My Health Record plan for 2017 and beyond.



### National Health Services Directory update

AHPA continues to work with Healthdirect on the National Health Services Directory (NHSD) project, supporting our allied health association members to increase the number of allied health professionals listed in the directory. AHPA is committed to increasing use of the NHSD, recognising its importance to the Australian health sector. The directory is completely free, having been developed and funded by all Australian governments. The NHSD:

- Lists over 150,000 health services across general practice, allied health, hospitals, specialists and more.
- Delivers 66 million health service search results each year for consumers and health providers.
- Is a key foundation for digital health initiatives such as secure electronic messaging, patient referrals, and discharge summaries through the National Endpoint Proxy Service (NEPS).

That makes the NHSD an essential directory for any allied health service seeking to connect to consumers and health providers. Over the coming months, many of your associations will be working with you to provide streamlined access to the directory. In the meantime, you can [find out more](#) or [register your service now](#).

### Australian Digital Health Agency Secure Messaging Steering Group

AHPA recently travelled to Canberra to participate in the first meeting of the Australian Digital Health Agency Secure Messaging Steering Group. The Steering Group consists of representatives from across the health sector as well as medical software providers and consumers. Its purpose is to advise the agency as they work to address barriers to secure communication between health providers. Some of the key focus areas for the group are:

- Supporting the development of standard document types that can be shared via secure messaging.
- Supporting the development of secure identifiers for health providers.
- Supporting early adoption projects to test the interoperability of different secure messaging systems such as referral and report sending between allied health practitioners and general practices.

The agency's intention is to rapidly address some of the key issues preventing interoperability of secure messaging systems and significantly increase the use of secure communication between providers. As this work progresses, AHPA will provide more detailed information about projects and activities relevant for the allied health sector.

For more information about any of the topics covered in this newsletter, please contact AHPA by emailing [comms@ahpa.com.au](mailto:comms@ahpa.com.au).

## Supporting uptake of digital health technology

*The Australian government is increasingly focusing on digital technology use in the health sector. My Health Record and other digital health projects will continue in 2017 and allied health practices are likely to benefit from being 'digitally ready'. That's why identifying support and guidance needs is a big priority for AHPA.*

### Digital Health Round Table

AHPA and its members have undertaken a range of activities over the last months, focused on understanding how best to support the allied health community to adopt digital health technology and practice software. AHPA's recent Digital Health Round Table brought together key government stakeholders, allied health associations, private practitioners and allied health software providers to discuss improved support for allied health practitioners. The event started with presentations from Tim Kelsey – CEO, Australian Digital Health Agency (ADHA), Bettina Konti - First Assistant Secretary, Strategic Health Systems and Information Management, Department of Health, Heather McDonald – Director, Participation and Adoption, ADHA, and Mark Cormack - Deputy Secretary, Strategic Policy and Innovation and Chief Allied Health Officer at the Department of Health.

Those presentations made clear that the Australian government is committed to developing and implementing a national digital health strategy to improve information sharing between health professionals in 2017. The government will also focus on improving benefits to patients and health providers using My Health Record, based on feedback from the recent consumer participation trials. A key goal will be to make digital health technology more accessible through improved interoperability and streamlined processes for using digital systems like My Health Record. A further focus will be medicines safety with work being undertaken with the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care to develop a My Health Record consolidated medications view.

Round Table participants also took part in a workshop focused on identifying the key requirements for allied health practices when choosing practice software. The workshop identified a range of priorities: cost-effectiveness; ease of use and installation; interoperability with other systems such as secure messaging and accounting systems; appointment setting and SMS reminders; adaptability for profession-specific needs such as customisable templates or drawing tools. The workshop also focused on identifying barriers to the use of practice software and how these can be addressed by AHPA and its members, software vendors, and government. Some of the key issues found were: the cost of purchasing and setting up digital systems; understanding and identifying appropriate software options; internet connectivity and difficulties involved in using cloud software in poorly connected areas; lack of interoperability between practice software and other systems requiring information to be entered multiple times. AHPA and its members are now working to develop collaborative activities to improve access to information and guidance for practitioners. We're also investigating how we can work more closely with government and software vendors to improve systems for allied health professionals.

### Webinars and guidance information

One of the areas AHPA will be focusing on in 2017 is delivering webinars and developing guidance information about the use of practice software and other digital health technology. We are currently in the process of determining the key areas of need in order to determine a plan of action. If you would like to provide feedback about how we can support you, please [contact AHPA via email](#).

### How can you help?

*Do you have experience using software in your practice? Are there features you've found particularly important? How have you been able to integrate clinical note-taking into your consultations? Do you have any tips for other practitioners? We'd love to hear from you about your experience using practice software so that we can better understand what works, and what doesn't, in your practice. Please [email us](#) to share your feedback.*