



Media release

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Technology delivers social distancing for healthcare in fight against COVID-19

Technology is poised to further help Australians during the COVID-19 pandemic through electronic prescriptions that will allow people convenient access to their medicines to people practising social distancing and self-isolation. This new development will complement the My Health Record which is already making critical health information available when it's most needed.

In Australia, evidence shows there are more than 250,000 hospital admissions annually as a result of medication related problems. Many of these are associated with poor availability of medicines information especially at transitions of care. My Health Record is improving this access to medicines information and is an integrated record of what medicines patients are taking to ensure the most safe and effective care.

The My Health Record system has 1.81 billion documents in it including: prescription and dispense information, Pharmacist Shared Medicines Lists, medical history, allergies, pathology and diagnostic imaging test results and immunisations, as well as hospital discharge summaries.

More technology is on its way. Under the Australian Government's National Health Plan for COVID-19, electronic prescriptions are now being fast-tracked to allow patients to receive vital healthcare services while maintaining physical distancing and, where necessary, isolation.

Electronic prescriptions are an alternative to paper prescriptions, and the solution being fast-tracked will see a unique QR barcode 'token' sent via an app (if they have one), SMS or email to the patient. This will allow people in self-isolation convenient access to their medicines and will lessen the risk of infection being spread in general practice waiting rooms and at community pharmacies.


This initiative is designed to support telehealth and will allow a doctor to generate an electronic prescription that patients can then share with a pharmacy.

A significant amount of work had already been done to ensure that necessary upgrades to both pharmacy and prescriber software can be done quickly and electronic prescriptions are expected to be progressively available from the end of May.

Ms Bettina McMahon interim CEO says, "the use of technology in healthcare has never been more critical, and Australia is in a better position than many other countries when it comes to digital health. Electronic prescriptions are another vital tool that will help to create a connected healthcare system for Australia.

"Australians should take comfort that governments and healthcare providers have made significant investment in healthcare technology over the past 10 years. We are now able to fast-track adoption of this tech to respond to this pandemic in a 21st Century way."

The Agency is launching a new community communications campaign next week to help people understand the benefits of technology in healthcare and the need to ensure the health system is connected to provide better health outcomes for all Australians.



The campaign features Dr Andrew Rochford, a Medical Practitioner with an Undergraduate Degree in Medical Science, Majoring in Anatomy and Neuroscience, Post Graduate degree from University of Sydney Medical School, Bachelor of Surgery with Honours.

Medically, he's trained in emergency medicine, having held Registrar positions at major teaching hospitals around Australia, including Royal North Shore Hospital in Sydney, Princess Alexandra Hospital in Brisbane and is currently working at the Northern Beaches Hospital.

Dr Rochford is a digital health expert with his own organisation 'Docta' which builds customised mobile smart clinics equipped with telemedicine and digital healthcare technology to improve access to healthcare resources and knowledge for people in remote areas round the world.

The campaign will feature in radio, online (including catch up TV) and in social media.

Watch the video [here](#).

My Health Record statistics (as at February 2020)

- Nearly 23 million Australians have a My Health Record
- More than 90% of pharmacies and GPs are registered and 94% of public hospital beds are connected.
- More than 112 million medicine documents (prescribe and dispense)
- Almost 40 million pathology reports
- More than 6 million diagnostic imaging reports
- More than 6 million discharge summaries
- More than 4 million shared health summaries
- 22.71 million My Health Records
- 13.6 million records with information in them

Media contact

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About the Australian Digital Health Agency

The Agency is tasked with improving health outcomes for all Australians through the delivery of digital healthcare systems, and implementing [Australia's National Digital Health Strategy – Safe, Seamless, and Secure: evolving health and care to meet the needs of modern Australia](#) in collaboration with partners across the community. The Agency is the System Operator of [My Health Record](#), and provides leadership, coordination, and delivery of a collaborative and innovative approach to utilising technology to support and enhance a clinically safe and connected national health system. These improvements will give individuals more control of their health and their health information, and support healthcare providers to deliver informed healthcare through access to current clinical and treatment information. Further information: www.digitalhealth.gov.au.