John Elferink
Minister for Health

Northern Territory leads the way in electronic health records

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The Northern Territory has a contemporary and mobile population which includes more than one million interstate visitors. My eHealth Record allows individuals to have secure electronic health information that is accurate and up to date in one centralised point.

Ten years ago the Northern Territory was the first jurisdiction to implement a shared electronic health record. The Northern Territory provides a unique opportunity to analyse the operation of an eHealth record in the Australian context.

During the Council of Australian Government’s Health meeting in Darwin, Health Ministers from every Australian jurisdiction received a presentation by the Northern Territory Department of Health and the National eHealth Transition Authority on an evaluation of Northern Territory’s My eHealth Record service. The evaluation was conducted by the National eHealth Transition Authority.

Similar to the national Personally Controlled Electronic Health Record (PCEHR) system, My eHealth Record captures summaries of information from healthcare events in an electronic record that is under the control of the healthcare consumer and is accessed by providers.

For the first time in Australia, we have strong evidence of the benefits of eHealth records in bridging the gaps in information that occur as patients move between different healthcare providers in the public and private sectors. The evaluation provides a clear case in support of the national PCEHR system.

“The Northern Territory Government is committed to providing the highest level of care to Territorians and we are extremely pleased to be leading the way with online health records,” Minister for Health John Elferink said.

"The evaluation showed that eHealth records reduced the time clinicians took to find information, and supported improved clinical decision-making and continuity of care for patients.

“A patient might present to the Emergency Department overnight, staff can access the patient’s My eHealth Record, and if the patient is registered, can review previous presentations, conditions and allergies enabling clinicians to provide accurate care.”
Department of Health Chief Executive Officer Professor Leonard Notaras AM, said continued advances in technology are welcomed particularly in the medical field - not only for health professionals but also for patients.

“Anything to improve a person’s journey through the health system, not only in terms of efficiencies but also allowing speedy diagnosis, is to be welcomed,” said Professor Notaras.

Use of an eHealth record has become embedded in practice for various healthcare practitioners in the Northern Territory. Evidence indicated that as well as clinicians in hospitals and remote health centres, this included groups such as specialist clinicians and pharmacists.

The evaluation also provides insights into how an eHealth record evolves and is taken up by the community and by healthcare providers. These are valuable learnings for the national PCEHR system.

The NT is in the final phases of transitioning My eHealth Record consumers and providers to the PCEHR. For My eHealth Record consumers, this will mean that they have an eHealth record that can be added to and accessed by healthcare providers they visit nationwide. This will further enhance the benefits for patients and providers.

The full evaluation report and a summary presentation is available on the NEHTA website and the eHealthNT website.

Media contact: Dimitra Grehl 0419 640 895