



Submission to the Australian Digital Health Agency: December 2016

YOUR HEALTH. YOUR SAY. A CONSULTATION WITH THE AUSTRALIAN COMMUNITY TO CO-PRODUCE THE NATIONAL DIGITAL HEALTH STRATEGY

The Australasian College for Emergency Medicine (ACEM) welcomes the opportunity to provide feedback on the development of the National Digital Health Strategy (the Strategy), proposed by the Australian Digital Health Agency.

ACEM is a not-for-profit organisation responsible for the training and ongoing education of emergency physicians, and for the advancement of professional standards in emergency medicine, in Australia and New Zealand. As the peak professional organisation for emergency medicine in Australasia, ACEM has a vital interest in ensuring the highest standards of emergency medical care are maintained for all patients across Australasia.

ACEM commends the Australian Digital Health Agency for its collaboration with stakeholders working within the health care sector on the development of the National Digital Health Strategy. ACEM considers that improvements to existing electronic health record systems, specifically the *My Health Record*, an integral component of this work.

The ability for hospital emergency departments (EDs) to coordinate with primary health care providers through using a digital health record is valuable, and offers the potential to improve the continuity and quality of patient care as well as improving efficiency of health care delivery.¹ ACEM's feedback to the Australian Digital Health Agency is provided from an emergency medicine perspective and therefore predominantly relates to improving the interaction of patients and emergency physicians with the *My Health Record*, as a core component of the proposed National Digital Health Strategy.

ACEM has consulted with its members regarding the development of the Strategy and notes that the feedback received strongly aligns with the fundamental proposal put forward by the Australian Digital Health Agency; namely that the public should have greater control of their health and care. Furthermore, feedback also indicated that ACEM members support the use of electronic health record systems such as the *My Health Record*, as these systems provide an accessible means through which patients can interact with their own health information.

¹ Murugabalaji K Mohan, Rod O'Bishop and James L Mallows, "Effect on an electronic medical record information system on emergency department performance," *Medical Journal of Australia*

However, while ACEM supports the use of the *My Health Record*, the challenges posed by this system also require acknowledgement. These challenges include difficulties associated with its complex user interface, as well as difficulties with enrolment into the system. Furthermore, as the *My Health Record* was introduced as an opt-in system when it was established in 2012, there has been minimal public uptake, with less than one in ten Australians enrolling to the system.²

ACEM considers that the *My Health Record* must assist individual (patient) users to take ownership and have a comprehensive understanding of their health issues. However without sufficient enrolment and maintenance of online records by patients and healthcare professionals alike, the effectiveness of the *My Health Record* system is diminished for other healthcare professionals who may wish to access information.

ACEM recommends that any e-health system must be appropriately integrated into existing hospital information technology systems, in order to achieve real value for patients and physicians. Achieving this would involve investments in technology to replace existing outdated ED information systems, as well as the ability to upload important information such as medication history, advance health directives, enduring power of attorney legal documentation and acute resuscitation plans.

ACEM looks forward to continuing to work with the Australian Digital Health Agency in the development of the National Digital Health Strategy, to ensure that clinical expertise is incorporated into any systems-based approaches, and in order to provide maximal benefit to patients and clinicians. ACEM thanks the Australian Digital Health Agency for the opportunity to provide feedback on the National Digital Health Strategy. If you require any clarification or further information, please do not hesitate to contact the ACEM Policy and Advocacy Manager Fatima Mehmedbegovic on (03) 9320 0444 or fatima.mehmedbegovic@acem.org.au.

Yours sincerely,



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² “*My Health Record* get one million more reasons to sign up,” The Hon Sussan Ley MP: Minister for Health and Aged Care, Minister for Sport, accessed December 21, 2016.
<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/ministers/publishing.nsf/Content/health-mediarel-yr2016-ley016.htm>