



E-health record snapshot – engagement by people with HIV

According to recent government data, there are now over 650,000 registered users of the eHealth record – sometimes known as the Personally Controlled Electronic Health Record. There has been a significant rise in registrations since assisted registration began earlier this year. Assisted registration enables healthcare organisations to help their patients with the process of signing up for an eHealth record. As part of the third stage of development of the roll-out of eHealth announced before the change of government, new elements will include the introduction of the National Prescription and Dispensing Service, child development information, and an electronic health record app.

St Vincent's Hospital and Mater Health, Sydney, recently completed a very interesting trial of the eHealth record, where they integrated the eHealth record framework into various hospital services. They worked in collaboration with East Sydney and Murrumbidgee Medicare Locals.

To reach patients who would benefit significantly from using an eHealth record, the trial targeted particular patient groups through various St Vincent's clinics, including the HIV/Immunology/Infectious Disease Unit, Heart, and Diabetes. Of all the patient groups the hospital approached to offer sign-up for the eHealth record, people with HIV were the most receptive, with almost 100% of the HIV-positive people targeted signing up.

The trial was significant as it was the first time a hospital in Australia accessed the national eHealth record system for its patients, as well as the first time a hospital submitted an electronic discharge summary to the national system. This connection allowed the hospital to see a recent and up to date summary of patients' healthcare information (including medications, allergies and medical history) which had been added by patient GPs.

Of the total several hundred patients using the eHealth record as part of the trial, only one person created access restrictions. This could reflect the fact that people generally were not concerned enough to restrict access to their record or, alternatively, it may indicate that the process is not clear and that they did not know how to restrict access to their record. Despite legitimate concerns about privacy and confidentiality of sensitive information, the high uptake of the eHealth record among people with HIV suggests that for many HIV-positive people an eHealth record is an attractive proposition.

Key to building and sustaining community confidence in the e-Health record is that the record meets expectations. It may be useful to evaluate the eHealth experience of people with HIV who were signed up in the St Vincent's Hospital and Mater Sydney trial, including benefits they perceive and problems they may have encountered.