



MEDIA RELEASE

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My Health Record can help prevent medication misadventures that see more than 230,000 people end up in hospital each year

Each year, approximately 230,000 Australians¹ are admitted to hospital as a result of medication misadventure. This is almost four times the annual number of people who are hospitalised as a result of motor vehicle accidents. It's also costing our health system \$1.2 billion each year yet 23 per cent of adverse drug events in primary care are preventable.

Having a My Health Record is one of the most effective ways to reduce the risks of medical misadventure because it can alert healthcare practitioners to any serious patient medication risks before it is too late.

My Health Record is an online summary that allows people to share and control their health information with doctors, hospitals and other healthcare providers from anywhere, at any time.

Dr Steve Hambleton, Deputy Chairman of the My Health Record Steering Committee and former AMA President said most of these medical misadventures are preventable.

"Medication mistakes that land people in hospital can cause serious illness and in worst cases, can kill," said Dr Hambleton.

"It's extraordinary that 230,000 people end up in hospital each year due to medical misadventures that are in most cases avoidable. That's almost four times the number of people who are hospitalised as a result of motor vehicle accidents.

"We all need to take medicine from time to time and it's a daily routine for many Australians. Yet most of us are blissfully unaware of how things can go wrong.


"Australia's doctors are currently hampered by a lack of patient information, especially at the time when they need it most. That's where having a My Health Record can make such a difference because it can alert them to any medicine and allergy dangers which could save your life in an emergency."

Examples of medication misadventure

Unknown allergy - A patient tells a GP they suffered a medication reaction but can't remember the name of the drug. Dr Hambleton had a patient who had anaphylaxis to a recently supplied medication - it started with 'P' but that was as much as he knew. He was quite sick in hospital and they managed his illness successfully. Could this have been penicillin? It was actually Piptaz which contains a semi synthetic penicillin and would be expected to cross react.

Interaction between drugs - Anti-depressant SSRIs - one of the most commonly prescribed for depression, can interact with Tramadol a commonly prescribed painkiller. The reaction can have serious and even fatal consequences if not recognised. Two prescribers both choosing the right drug without the knowledge of the other can lead to trouble. Another classic is the combination of an ACE inhibitor (for blood pressure) a

¹ Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care. (2013). Literature Review: Medication Safety in Australia. ACSQHC, Sydney



diuretic (for blood pressure) and a Non-Steroidal Anti-inflammatory drug (for arthritis) that can lead to a substantial decrease in kidney function. It could be as simple as Ibuprofen over the counter for arthritis.

Multiple Brands – Dr Hambleton had a patient with diabetes who was given a generic drug and they unfortunately took the new drug and their existing supply with devastating consequence. The result was a hypoglycaemic episode while driving that led to a major car accident with multiple vehicles.

My Health Record places Australians in control of their own healthcare and, where permitted by the individual, gives healthcare providers secure digital access to key health information at the point of care, wherever that may be.

Its benefits include reduced hospital admissions, reduced duplication of tests, better coordination of care for people with chronic and complex conditions, and more informed treatment decisions.

Australians can manage privacy and control access to their My Health Record including what information gets uploaded and who has access such as family members, carers and healthcare providers.

By the end of 2018, a My Health Record will be created for every Australian, unless they choose not to have one. If people choose not to have a My Health Record, they will be able to opt out of having one created for them before 15 November 2018.

More than 6 million Australians already have a My Health Record and 13,150 healthcare professional organisations are connected, including general practices, hospitals, pharmacies, diagnostic imaging and pathology practices.

My Health Record has been running for six years and is already making healthcare management for individuals and healthcare providers easier and safer, and could save lives in an emergency situation.

More information on My Health Record can be found at www.myhealthrecord.gov.au. People who do not want a My Health Record can opt out by visiting the My Health Record website or by calling 1800 723 471 for phone-based assistance. Additional support is available to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders, people from non-English speaking backgrounds, people with limited digital literacy, and those living in rural and remote regions.

Media contact: Mobile: 0428 772 421 Email: media@digitalhealth.gov.au

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.