

## My Health Record opens new era for health care

MEDIA RELEASE MONDAY 16 JULY 2018

The potential of My Health Record to transform the health care system in Australia will depend on consumers taking an active role in ensuring the system works for them in a way they can trust, the Consumers Health Forum said today.

“Over the next three months Australians will be able to check the benefits of My Health Record and whether it is right for them before deciding whether or not to opt out. After October 16, the MHR will automatically enrol people unless they have taken the specific step of opting out,” the CEO of the Consumers Health Forum, Leanne Wells, said.

“MHR will provide a single repository for people’s medical records housing details such as their medical treatments, current medications, tests, scans, allergies, immunisations and referrals and their end of life wishes. It will enable authorised health providers anywhere in Australia to see their record, facilitating prompt attention and avoiding the need for repetition of your health history and duplication of results. Importantly individuals will be able to control what parts of their health record can be viewed by health providers.

“The full benefits of MHR will develop over time: the more it is used by patients and doctors the more rapidly these benefits will be realised. A new population wide system of such significance may experience teething problems. Our expectation is that the government will continue to work with clinicians, IT experts, consumers and others to continue to evolve the system and its functionality.

“What is important to keep in mind is that MHR offers to health care the potential for the sort of digital benefits we take for granted now in virtually every other area of modern life: instant and comprehensive communication of information.

“We urge consumers and their health practitioners, particularly GPs, to discuss the MHR and any issues it poses for individuals. The greater the participation of consumers and health practitioners the more benefit it offers for all.

“The advantages of a single electronic health record are significant particularly for those with complex and chronic conditions and the elderly in ensuring they get the right care.

“Concerns about the privacy and security of personal health information are to be expected. The Federal Government and the Australian Digital Health Agency has instituted systems to protect privacy and we expect these will be under constant review to ensure

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privacy breaches are prevented and that the technology is state-of-the-art. The protection of sensitive health information deserves no less.

“We suggest people familiarize themselves with the advice about MHR on the [myhealthrecord.gov.au](http://myhealthrecord.gov.au) website or call 1800 723 471. For those who do not have access to the internet, information packs will be available at Post Offices

“It is important that people do not regard MHR as an imposition. Rather the arrival of personal electronic health records offers every individual a fresh opportunity to have greater control and awareness of their health care.

“The Consumers Health Forum in association with the Australian Digital Health Agency will be conducting a series of webinars for our members and health stakeholders to discuss the issues of importance to consumers which are raised by the expansion of MHR and the opt out provision.

“The webinars will give our members, stakeholders and consumers an opportunity to consider the issues that concern them and help ensure that well-based information is available to health organisations throughout Australia,” Ms Wells said.

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