



Digital health excellence powered by accurate provider data

A distinctive feature of Australia's health system is the complex, inter-related web of information that links public, private and community providers, facilities and patients.

Health professionals and patients rely on accurate, timely updates of patient and health provider information across the system. Incomplete, inconsistent or out-of-date provider details can mean the difference between discharging a patient into the care of the correct GP, or exposing the organisation (and patient) to risk.

Care must be taken to ensure the accuracy of both complex medical information and common records such as patient name, contact number and provider number.

Deploying a flexible, enterprise-wide provider directory framework delivers significant benefits to health providers and patients including better health outcomes, risk reduction and operational efficiency. The use of ehealth infrastructure that connects to national directories further enhances an organisation's operational environment ensuring the right information is fed to and is accessible where it's needed most.

This paper is cognisant that many organisations have their own internal processes and specific requirements for maintaining provider details. The opportunity afforded by an Enterprise Provider Directory (EPD) is the ability to centralise these records and produce a 'single point of reference' that can cascade to all connected departments and teams.

Find out more:

☎ 1800 952 282

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Connecting to national records

Digital health care relies on secure communication and reliable connections between health systems. The right data must flow securely, when and where it is needed for the provision of care across various health services.

Before health providers send information essential to a patient's ongoing care, they must be confident this information will arrive at the correct destination and be available to authorised recipients.

Australian government agency HealthDirect, runs the National Health Services Directory (NHSD).

The NHSD gives organisations the ability to check details for health care providers across Australia, which helps provide certainty for communications. The challenge for

many organisations is making this external tool part of their workflows.¹

The directory's data constantly changes as health care professionals move between jobs and institutions, and as individuals receive separate Medicare provider numbers for each practice where they work.

When integrating access to national directories, such as the NHSD, it is important to ensure efficient, live connections for accuracy and immediacy.

The National Health Services Directory (NHSD) maintains:

350,000 records

including location, provider and contact details for more than



150,000 services across



300 service types

including medical, allied health, aged care and disability services.



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1. <https://about.healthdirect.gov.au/about-the-nhsd>

Reducing risk with accurate data

Organisations that work with out-of-date information run the risk of sending documents to the wrong location, and having an inappropriate person read them.

Up-to-date information is critical for secure messaging systems, as each record needs to be attached to valid location data.

Secure messaging systems are the most efficient and timely way for clinical correspondence (such as letters, referrals, specialists' reports, discharge summaries and results) to be transmitted electronically and securely between health professionals. This timeliness can have a significant impact on patient care, reducing instances such as GPs not receiving discharge hospital summaries ahead of patients' follow-ups.

Transfer of care procedures require that the right doctor or care giver is contacted to take over the continuing management of the patient's health concerns. All health care providers strive for accuracy, whether individuals are simultaneously using connected systems or manually updating departmental records. For the transfer of care, accuracy remains a constant challenge in public and private hospitals.

Uncertainty over the correct provider number can create significant hold-ups in the discharge process, accumulating days of administrative effort, impacting available beds, treatment capacity and with adverse flow-on effects across the organisation.

Australian healthcare providers at-a-glance

Many thousands working for our better health



More than
100,000
registered doctors

(Source: AIHW Medical Practitioners Work Force 2015)²



**698 public and
624 private hospitals**

(Source: AIHW)³



31
Primary Health Networks

(source: Department of Health)⁴



660,000
registered health practitioners in
14 allied health professions

(Source: Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency)⁵

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2. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/workforce/medical-practitioners-workforce-2015/contents/how-many-medical-practitioners-are-there>

3. <https://www.aihw.gov.au/reports/hospitals/ahs-2014-15-hospital-resources/contents/summary>

4. <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/PHN-Profiles>

5. <https://www.ahpra.gov.au/News/2016-11-10-media-release.aspx>

Consolidating effort with an Enterprise Provider Directory

Within an individual health care organisation, there are multiple systems that contain provider information relating to practitioners within the organisation, network or region.

These can include everything from the patient administration and departmental systems (such as Radiology, Pathology and Pharmacy), to IT, payroll and even car park access.

Each of these systems contain an individual address book, and it's common to have separate people independently updating the information in each system. Substantial time, effort and resources are spent on duplicate tasks with the true cost of this inefficiency and drag on organisational performance often underestimated. For the individuals involved, these are hours of collective administration that could be better spent on tasks that improve patient outcomes.

With manual processes, information in directory systems can easily become unreliable, with records incomplete, duplicated, inaccurate or simply out-of-date.

In response, many organisations in the health system are moving towards Enterprise Provider Directory (EPD) systems – a single master address book across the organisation, where provider information can be updated centrally and made available to all departments.

The concept is enhanced when the enterprise directory is connected to a national directory. Not only does the organisation obtain the time and costs savings of centralising its own records in an EPD, these records are then augmented, expanded beyond to the whole of Australia. End users no longer need to take extra steps to access a national directory. Data within national resources, otherwise external to organisational tools, becomes practical and more relevant for internal workflows.

Importantly, an organisation's own records residing within the EPD can be corrected instantly by authorised personnel for the immediate benefit of co-workers across departments. This stands in contrast to the many days taken to update individual records in national directories.



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Key questions for deploying an EPD

Organisations considering an EPD must assess a range of business and operational issues ahead of choosing the right technology solution.

An Implementation Planning Study (IPS) that includes a workflow audit is highly recommended. The audit should be exhaustive to ensure all departments, groups and teams who manage provider contact lists are included. The extent of duplicated effort can be surprising.

From there on, other questions include:

- Who within the organisation should be authorised to have this information?
- Who should be authorised to update it?
- Who will be responsible for change auditing and how will it be managed?
- What information is available to the whole directory and what information is locally available?
- How are different instances of information linked?
- How is secure messaging linked to these providers?
- What's in it for the end user, and what can they customise?
- Who is responsible for the implementation?
- Who is responsible for change management throughout the organisation?

Looking ahead: Ease of use helps EPD adoption

When deploying an EPD, consideration must also be given to what user habits, behaviours and workplace habits will help ensure it achieves the organisation's goals.

A common issue encountered is the use of 'cheat sheets' or contact lists that contain frequently used details such as names and numbers in workspaces. Not only this approach difficult to manage from a security and authorisation point of view, accurate information is not easily maintained.

In this scenario an EPD offers the security and accuracy of a managed environment and can succeed in gaining adoption if it offers staff the ability to their own address book or favourites lists.

At the same time, it will cement its ongoing utility if it genuinely makes tasks easier and more efficient to complete.

Talk to us about your provider data management

Contact us to discuss how we can help you assess your provider data management requirements, develop a strategic plan and deliver an integrated Enterprise Provider Directory.

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