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Directions launched for health information management

The Australian General Practice Network (AGPN) has officially launched its information management (IM) policy framework, providing a clear direction for IM in general practice and the Divisions Network.

The importance and necessity of health IM in Australia is growing rapidly. The new vision comes at a crucial time in the development of eHealth in this country.

AGPN Chair Dr Tony Hobbs said general practice is the most computerised and most connected part of the health system.

"Health information is critical for future planning and funding of the health sector and with the largest database of health information residing on the computers of GPs, general practice is the centre of eHealth development.

"The AGPN policy provides a framework to drive the current programs and the future of eHealth.

"Better IM will improve patient care and ultimately health outcomes across all population groups. Information and care will become patient centred rather than institution centred," Dr Hobbs said.

A modern health care system requires IM systems to support the delivery of effective health services and is fast becoming a focus of both state and federal health departments.

Dr Hobbs said IM systems cannot function effectively without the involvement of general practice and divisions.

"This policy recognises the key role divisions play in assisting general practice to retrieve and store accurate health data.

"The Divisions network has been crucial to the growth of general practice computing over the years," Dr Hobbs said.

The Divisions Network will integrate IM principles and best practice into its activities to further support effective general practice-led primary health care. The outcomes of this integration can include:

- enhanced patient care and outcomes through timely access to accurate and reliable records that can be appropriately shared between different providers within multidisciplinary teams and across all levels of the health sector
- seamless quality of patient care by consolidating and advancing linkages with providers and areas throughout the health care sector by promoting a systemic approach to integrating data from multiple sources
- improved health needs assessment and planning through utilisation of quality population health information at local, state and national levels
- the promotion of a professional culture around the use of quality health data in the general practice and division setting, with a focus on current, transferable and complete health summaries, peer review and self-audit
- greater general practice business innovation and efficiency through the use of quality data and the establishment of appropriate IM and IT infrastructure and models.

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