

Health Information Strategy Action Committee



Note from Paul Cressey

Chair of the Health Information Strategy Action Committee

It is for good reason that a National Network for New Zealand is Action Zone 1 of the Health Information Strategy for New Zealand 2005. The vision that participants in the New Zealand health & disability sector can easily, effectively and reliably communicate over a network in a secure environment is very compelling. With the ability to connect primary stakeholders in healthcare processes, such a network provides an important component of integrated healthcare.

New Zealand Health Network

The New Zealand Health Network was officially launched in 1999 as the Health Intranet and was adopted initially by primary care organisations as a secure way of communicating health information over the internet. In 2001, when District Health Boards came into existence, it was adopted by them for access to national systems. In 2005 the network was renamed "New Zealand Health Network" and the governance functions were transferred to HISAC's Infrastructure Sub-committee.

The New Zealand Health Network has continued to grow and now has 800 organisations signed up. The network provides health organisations with a wide range of capabilities; such as, receipt of laboratory results, access to the NHI and HPI, access to Pharmac Special Authorities, access to and provision of data to HealthPAC payment systems, submission of ACC claims, on-line access to hospital patient data, and receipt of hospital discharge summaries. Furthermore users of these systems do not have to be aware of the technical intricacies of network security - under the NZ Health Network, the network providers are accredited and must provide a secure environment in accordance with agreed standards.

More recently, a project has been commissioned by the Ministry of Health to look at the Next Generation Health

Network (NGHN). Sector consultation and requirements gathering is currently underway to ensure that the NGHN reflects sector needs. At the same time a team from CISCO, a major global network provider, is working on an architecture design for such a network. This design will be informed by a policy framework and specifications which build on the current NZ Health Network infrastructure and standards.

Infrastructure Sub-Committee

The administration, support and governance aspects of the Health Network are currently provided by HISAC's Infrastructure Sub-Committee (ISC).

Within a short space of time this group has made several improvements and you will then hear more about their activities in the future. There are two achievements in particular HISAC would like to share with you.

These relate to improvements to the registration process and information presentation, as well as product accreditation developments.



Grant Purdie of HISAC updating Rotorua GP Dr Harry Pert on HISAC's activities during the recent Health Informatics New Zealand (HINZ) Conference.

Improving New Zealanders' healthcare and health by having:

- The right information
- In the right place
- At the right time

The improved registration process

The process for registering to join the Health Network involves three steps with multi-party contact. The first is applying to join; the second is choosing a network provider for the necessary connections and firewalls, and thirdly applying to the owners of relevant resources for access. This may require a Digital Certificate or electronic 'passport' to establish the users' credentials.

The HISAC Office has been actively working to streamline these complex processes. As a result the amount of form-filling required has been dramatically reduced. Furthermore, all the necessary documentation and links, including background information, are now available at the one location: HISAC's website: www.HISAC.govt.nz

HISAC Office Manager takes up role

Dougal McKechnie has settled into the office since taking up the role of HISAC Manager in mid August. "I've really appreciated the warm welcome I have received, and enjoyed the challenge of getting up to speed with the issues." Early on Dougal initiated meeting individuals and organisations across the sector. Ongoing engagement with stakeholders across the sector is a priority. "There is significant interest in the Health Information Strategy and it is important that the HISAC Office plays an active role in widely communicating the strategy and its implementation."

Dougal came to HISAC from the Ministry of Justice, where he most recently led the development and launch of the Justice Sector Information Strategy to 2011. In that role he was also responsible for the successful implementation of the previous Justice Sector Information Strategy up to 2006.



Recently appointed HISAC Manager, Dougal McKechnie with Jaya Dayal and Allie Breslin discussing the revised Health Network registration process.

Product accreditation

Smaller organisations such as general practices and NGOs seeking a network provider in order to link up to the New Zealand Health Network currently have two options: SecureIT supplied by HealthLink and Telecom's HealthExpress.

These products have been accredited by HISAC as meeting networking requirements for the New Zealand Health Network. The accreditation process provides assurance to the sector and to facilitate uptake of the Network.

Telecom has recently upgraded HealthExpress. The upgrade product - secureME - is currently going through the HISAC accreditation process.

HISAC is also considering a proposal from Telecom for accreditation of its HealthZone product, which allows interconnection between larger sites such as district health boards, and is characterised by a significant increase in network capacity.

These accreditation proposals are being considered in the wider context of an amendment to the Health Network Code of Practice. The amendment is going through a Standards NZ review process. The Health Network Code of Practice is an agreed set of rules that determines how information can be exchanged in the health sector and includes criteria for both users and network providers. The review takes into account recently received public comment.

HISAC will be updating you on product accreditation in its next newsletter.

We'd like to hear from you

Engagement with the sector is an ongoing priority for HISAC. If you would like an opportunity for people from your organisation to meet with HISAC, please contact the HISAC Office (details below).

How to contact us

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Put HISAC's website on you list of favourites: www.HISAC.govt.nz