

Sector enthusiasm for new HISO initiative – National Electronic Referrals and Discharge standards

Welcome to the first HISO newsletter for 2005. We open the New Year with a Special Edition issue, which brings you coverage of the Referrals and Discharges Summit organised by HISO in Wellington on 7 December.

The Summit canvassed sector opinion on the issue of electronic patient referrals and discharge summaries with a view to developing a national standard in this area, - an endeavour identified by HISO as a high priority.



An unprecedented number of sector representatives - including health care professionals, administrators, and Health IT vendors – dedicated their time and energy to illuminating the complexities of the subject, and expressing their support for a new national standard.

“The response to our invitation was a real milestone for both HISO and the sector”, commented HISO Chair Paul Cressey who opened the event. “The number of people who contributed so positively was fantastic!”

What the sector said...

“...This would be a great idea and save a lot of time for GPs who tend to have to copy paper discharges into electronic notes...”

“...It has always struck me as totally illogical for me to generate a hospital referral on my computer – print the referral and post it to the hospital who in turn file the referral (occasionally losing it) so the consultant can read at the patients appointment and then dictate a consultation letter which is then typed on a word processor prior to being printed sent to the dispatch room and eventually posted to me some 4 weeks later - where I read and file it... Of course everything should be done electronically...”

“...The facilitation of timely information among healthcare providers to assist with care is supported and in accordance with work done by the sector about privacy and information sharing over the past few years...”

Speakers capture the issues

The first part of the programme featured six speakers:

- Mike Rillstone - NZHIS
- Tony Cooke - DHBs
- Dr Richard Medicott - Independent Practitioners' Association
- Derek Gower - Houston Medical
- Peter Sergeant - Medtech
- Stephen Chu NZ HL7 Users' Group

Addressing participants from their respective areas of expertise the speakers captured the benefits offered by the development of a national standard, both in terms of ensuring and enhancing the interoperability of systems and in promoting competitive leverage.

The Workshop...

Within this context participants moved into smaller working groups, their discussions guided by four key questions:

1. What are referrals and discharges?
2. What parts of the referrals and discharges process should be standardised?
3. What are the benefits of referrals and discharges standards?
4. How will the sector contribute?

Discussions on these four areas were energetic and comprehensive. A report back from each group highlighted just how complex the issue is, especially in scoping the two areas, but also indicated unequivocal support for the development of national standards in the area. Clear too, was sector support for HISO to take the lead in project managing this endeavour.



What happens next...

“As the Ministerial Committee charged with the strategic management of national health information standards, HISO is well placed to lead this project. We look forward to engaging with the health sector to make it happen”, said Paul Cressey. Initially a small Working Group will be convened to develop information and a proposal for the HISO Committee.

- 1 Feb Working Group teleconference.
- Late Feb Summit attendees consulted regarding scope of Referrals and Discharges projects

- 23 Feb HISO Committee meeting considers Referral and Discharge Proposal.
- March Expert Committee convened and standard development processes commences.
- Late 2005 Draft standards developed by the Expert Committee released for Public Comment.
- Early 2006 National standard will be published.

Cost Benefits of Electronic Patient Referrals
In Denmark patient referrals to hospital are still predominantly paper-based (59%). The Director General of the European Commission Information Society commissioned a study to focus on the quantifiable cost benefits associated with the operation of electronic patient referrals in the Danish healthcare system. Initial findings indicated potential savings of \$NZ 3,457,040 in direct costs per year. If society costs are included this figure could increase to \$NZ 5,909,592 per year, or \$NZ 9.00 per referral.

If you would like to receive progress reports, or participate in the next phase of consultation on this matter please email your full contact details to vyvien_starbuck@hiso.govt.nz

Update on Standards

The National Ethnicity Standards are available at www.moh.govt.nz/publications

HISO endorsed Health Level 7 (HL7) Standards for Health Information Communications as a National Standard for New Zealand.

The New Zealand Observation Code Sets (LOINC adoption) are to be published in March.

The Health Practitioner Index Code Set and Data Set are to be published in March.

The Primary Health Care Practice Management Systems Specification will be published by Standards New Zealand in April.