



## **MEDIA RELEASE - 17 AUGUST 2007**

The Health Information Strategy Action Committee (HISAC) recently convened a national ePharmacy Leaders Forum which discussed ways to reduce medication errors and improve patient outcomes through electronic medicines management in both primary and secondary care.

HISAC Chair, Paul Cressey, said “It was a significant achievement to have unanimous support amongst a large group of pharmacy, technology, primary and secondary care leaders.”

“The forum demonstrated a high degree of awareness of the complexity of the situation as well as the degree of urgency and cooperation required for progress”.

HISAC received strong support for a sector-led approach. The Committee will now work to establish an ePharmacy Strategic Champions Group and a Technical Reference Group in August.

“The sector can expect practical outcomes within the next six to twelve months,” said Mr Cressey.

HISAC chaired the event with individuals attending from General Practice, Pharmacy, Elder Care, the District Health Board Pharmacy Advisory Group and the District Health Board Safe and Quality Use of Medicines Committee, the RNZCGP, various Health IT vendors, the Pharmacy Guild, the Pharmaceutical Society and the Ministry of Health.

The half day included short presentations by sector representatives followed by group discussion. A key issue that emerged is the different medicines coding systems used in GP, hospital, and pharmacy settings.

The main outcome of the forum was an agreement to support a collaborative, sector-led, and incremental approach toward electronic medicines management based on agreed standards and a medicines terminology that could be used across all care settings. The essential components HISAC will seek to advance include a standardised electronic pharmacy ‘message’ and a common national electronic ‘dictionary’ of medicines able to be complemented by applications such as decision support tools. This work will be preceded by a joint business case detailing benefits for the public, GPs, pharmacists and the wider health sector.

**ENDS**

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## Questions & Answers

**Q:** What is HISAC and what is its role?

**A:** The Health Information Strategic Action Committee was established by the Minister of Health in August 2005 to provide governance of, oversight of, and leadership for the implementation of the Health Information Strategy for New Zealand 2005.

**Q:** What is the Health Information Strategy for New Zealand?

**A:** The Health Information Strategy for New Zealand (HIS-NZ) presents a sector-wide business strategy for the health and disability sector to develop and supply innovative health information systems. The success of HIS-NZ relies on the co-operation and collaboration of the entire health sector and has three broad objectives:

- to increase participation through networking and sharing of health information across the sector
- to support collaboration across providers in the care of consumers
- to improve targeting through improved decision-making.

**Q:** What is the ePharmacy 'Action Zone'?

**A:** HIS-NZ identifies 12 'Action Zones' that provide a focus for Health Information in New Zealand over the next 3 to 5 years. HISAC has contributed to sector-led development of an agreed vision to implement these priorities by means of respective 'Initial View' publications, and most recently the respective Preliminary Scope and Approach (PS&A) documents for each Action Zone. One of these Action Zones is known as ePharmacy (Action Zone 4).

**Q:** What does HISAC mean by ePharmacy?

**A:** ePharmacy can be simply thought of as electronic prescribing between a doctor and a pharmacy however it also involves the broader technical medical reference system, messaging, and medicines terminology. It could also encompass barcoding, decision support and other applications. It is not e-orders, selling medicines online, finding quality information on the net, or a specific product however.

**Q:** What is an eDictionary?

**A:** In ePharmacy this is the core part of a national Medicines Reference System to identify drug and device information such as active ingredients, excipients, generic dose form, proprietary dose form as stated by manufacturer, route, dose strength/size, units of measure, packaging and container details, price, subsidies, brand name, manufacturer, sponsor, colour/flavour as stated by manufacturer, supply chain data, statutory controls, ATC (anatomical-therapeutic-chemical) classification etc.

**Q:** What standards are required for ePharmacy?

**A:** ePharmacy standards include, but are not limited to:

- Standards to support the exchange of information across ordering/prescribing, review, dispensing and administration.
- Ensuring that each transaction is recorded (at source) in accordance with standards for formatting, nomenclature and code sets
- Common communication standards for electronic transfer of prescription and dispensing information electronically between different systems and the Sector organisations