



WA GP Advisory Panel Special Interest Panel: WAPHA Digital Health Strategy consultation

17 October 2023



Overview

Purpose of special interest panel

WA Primary Health Alliance (WAPHA) is seeking insights, feedback and perspectives from GPs to inform the development of the Digital Health Strategy. The strategy aims to recognise the role of digital health as an enabler rather than the solution and provide an action plan designed around the unique requirements of communities across the state.

Background

Digital Health is one of the seven key priorities for Primary Health Networks set by the Commonwealth and is one of four components of the Strengthening Medicare Taskforce Report.

WAPHA's Strategic Plan 2023-2026 commits WAPHA to lead the delivery and support of secure digitally enabled health care with partners locally and nationally.

WAPHA's Digital Health Strategy 2024-2026 will provide the vision and high-level roadmap of activities designed to meet these commitments and leverage the power of digital health to shape, strengthen and sustain primary healthcare in WA and support an environment where:

- Consumers are equipped to take an active role in managing their health
- Communication and information sharing is secure and timely
- Clinicians have access to key clinical information when and where required
- Population data unique needs of each community are understood
- The Primary Care workforce is supported to use digital health tools

“Whilst there are many definitions of digital health, the term generally refers to the use of technology to support the consumers and professionals across the healthcare system.

Digital health is defined as:
The use of information and communication technologies (ICT) for health care including supporting patients, conducting research, educating the health workforce, tracking diseases and monitoring public health.”

Discussion and feedback

Experience of digital technologies and applications

My Health Record

It was noted that My Health Record (MHR) use by practitioners is trending upwards however use is not consistent.

MHR is very useful, especially for medication and medical history confirmations however uploading of shared health summaries could be improved and the inability for GPs to be able to upload PDFs is a frustrating barrier.

Other identified barriers included:

- Admin staff are unable to access a patient's MHR which negatively impacts accurate and timely record maintenance
- On the public hospital side, it can be hard to correctly identify a patient's GP to upload a discharge summary to their record
- Accessibility is a problem – a GP can't have a patient record and MHR open at the same time which increases the time taken to check and add information

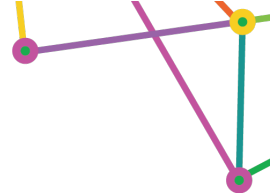
Suggested future improvements include:

- Medication reconciliation supported by MHR interfacing with practice software
- Addressing discrepancies between differing requirements for private and public practitioners to share/upload information to MHR
- Ability to download information in MHR to patient files

It was noted that while hospitals and specialists need to improve MHR upload rates and have a consistent approach across the board, GPs also need to ensure that high quality information is regularly uploaded to MHR.

Other applications

- HealthPathways was flagged as being useful when needed although sometimes hard to navigate
- There is an app for interactions with COVID medications – integration with practice software would be helpful
- Telehealth, eScripts, HealthShare, Better Consult, Doctors Control Panel and Ornament: Health Monitoring were also all mentioned as useful apps/tools to assist with patient care



Discussion and feedback

Value of digital health in near future

Consensus was clear on the value and increasing importance of digital health with several in-progress initiatives such as voluntary patient registration and refinements to SmartReferrals (for GP referrals to hospitals/Central Referral Service [CRS] in WA) seen to have potential to provide value to GPs.

It was also noted that existing programs such as the Fiona Stanley Hospital Virtual Immunology Clinic which received extremely positive feedback should be rolled out to other specialities.

Other key considerations for future digital health initiatives included:

- Avoiding fragmentation of care when progressing digital health initiatives
- Streamlining activity and reducing the administrative burden on GPs as much as possible
- Awareness of the digital divide and difference in ability to access digital tools and technologies across populations – not everyone has the same knowledge or capability

- Improving issues with clunky/unwieldy processes with practice software as well as increasing interoperability and application/system integration
- Expanding GP access to patient care management apps – the Manage My Care app was cited as an example that would be useful for GPs
- Ensuring the duty of care with telemonitoring/app development remains with the patient to access care in a way that is manageable and gives them clear guidance on what to do rather than being transferred to GPs without GP involvement

Next steps

Feedback received will be used to inform the development of the Digital Health Strategy. In addition, WAPHA will take feedback on referral access criteria, CRS and Manage My Care to the Outpatient Reform Committee.

