



News Release

Australian Divisions of General Practice Ltd.

04/28

02/08/04

Smart cards for better health

The peak body representing Divisions of General Practice in Australia has welcomed the arrival of smart technology into health services through the introduction of a Medicare smartcard.

The Australian Divisions of General Practice (ADGP) says the smartcard technology will give patients greater control over their own health information, and will give GPs and other health professionals better access to information to enhance the services they provide.

ADGP Chair Dr Rob Walters says it is high time that 21st century technologies such as electronic health records are adopted widely in the health system.

“By giving people instant access to their organ donor records, childhood immunisation records, Medicare safety net status and information about their Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme spending, the smartcard should help people to make informed decisions about their own health,” said Dr Walters.

“Importantly, patients will retain control over their information, as they alone will decide whether or not to register for the cards.

“They will also decide which health providers or services they wish to share their personal information with.

“In time, the new card will also allow people to access their own health records over the internet.

“The smartcards should not only be able to assist doctors and other health providers to integrate and coordinate their care, but also enable better information gathering throughout the health sector, leading to a more responsive system.

Dr Walters says the Divisions of General Practice Network should be utilised to ensure the implementation of this initiative is successful at the coalface of health care - in general practice.

“ADGP looks forward to assisting the HIC with the introduction of this scheme, through providing feedback from doctors, to ensure it is in the best interests of patients and primary health care providers,” he says.

ADGP is the peak body of the Divisions of General Practice Network which links 95 per cent of GPs across Australia in a national structure that supports general practice and improves community access to primary care. This Network is the key to integrating general practice with other sectors of the health system, both government and non-government, to deliver high quality care to the Australian community.

For comment: Dr Rob Walters, 0418 127 123

For further information: Kerry Ungerer, 0412 424 309