

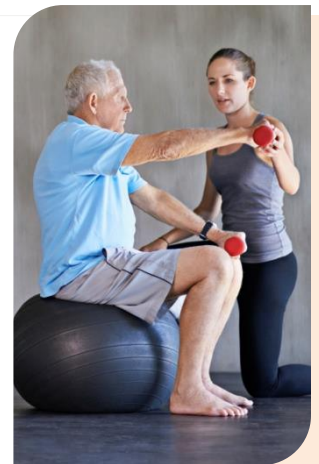
# DIGITAL HEALTH UPDATE | August

Welcome to the second edition of the AHPA digital health update for allied health practitioners. The AHPA digital health update will be circulated monthly for the duration of AHPA's digital health projects, providing news and practical information to support allied health involvement in digital health initiatives. We encourage you to get in touch with questions, comments or feedback by emailing [comms@ahpa.com.au](mailto:comms@ahpa.com.au).

## My Health Record News

### My Health Record opt-out trials now live in North Queensland and Nepean Blue Mountains

The Australian Government recently launched My Health Record opt-out trials in North Queensland and the Nepean Blue Mountains region. As of July 15th, 2016, almost a million Australians in both regions have My Health Records allowing registered health professionals to access and contribute health information on their behalf. That brings the number of My Health Records nationally to almost 4 million. As part of the trial, [AHPA is working on a project to identify allied health practitioners](#) in both regions who may wish to contribute information to My Health Record on behalf of their patients. AHPA can provide information and support to assist you in identifying software options and accessing My Health Record.



### August My Health Record Information Sessions in Cairns, Townsville and Mackay

AHPA and North Queensland PHN will deliver a series of My Health Record information sessions in Cairns, Townsville and Mackay on the 9th, 10th and 11th of August with support from the Department of Health. The sessions will provide information about My Health Record as well as opportunities to see practice software demonstrations for allied health practices wishing to contribute information to My Health Record. Please visit <http://eepurl.com/b-lypX> to register.

### My Health Record portals now mobile-enabled

The consumer and provider portals of My Health Record are now mobile-enabled with new layouts designed to make My Health Record easy to read and use across a broad range of screen sizes. My Health Record has also been made available to health app developers. Mobile apps are currently being developed for both people in the community and health professionals. For health professionals, app development may provide additional options for accessing My Health Record either through new providers of conformant apps or from expanded functionality from existing software vendors.

### National Health Services Directory updated with My Health Record status

The National Health Services Directory (NHSD) was recently updated with additional functionality including the inclusion of a My Health Record logo showing if a health provider is registered for My Health Record. The NHSD is a public directory of health services around Australia designed for use by both health professionals looking for referral points and people in the community searching for health providers. With the NHSD increasingly being used by both health professionals and health consumers to find health services, the new functionality has been designed to help consumers easily identify if a health practice will be able to interact with My Health Record.

## Paper vs Digital: Should you digitise?

**How effective are your patient records? Can you easily access patient histories? Can you automatically generate bills for patients? Can you access or share information with other health providers?**

Allied health practitioners are increasingly using practice software to future-proof their practice, improve interaction with other health professionals and engage with initiatives such as My Health Record. But many practitioners remain uncertain about the pros and cons of using of software in their practice. This short guide aims to provide a brief introduction to encourage further thinking about practice software. We thank the Australian Psychological Association and Speech Pathology Australia for sharing their resources.

### Benefits

*Moving to digital health record keeping and practice software can have a range of benefits for your practice. The following list is based on feedback from allied health practitioners that have made the change.*

- Better coordination of care through better communication with, and access to health information from, other health professionals.
- Increased credibility with other health professionals and access to evolving health system and related technology.
- Reduced time spent on administrative tasks.
- More efficient data entry through use of drop downs or checkboxes for repetitive tasks.
- Access to tools that can automatise tasks such as calculating BMI.
- Ability to better control access to patient records with passwords and role permissions.
- More secure than carrying paper files by reducing risk of loss or theft.
- Ability to search for information and compare outcomes or report on common issues.
- Ability to store patient details such as notes, reports and billing information in one location.
- Integrated account-keeping.
- Ability to interact with patients via connected health apps.

### Issues and concerns

*A number of issues are frequently raised by allied health practitioners as barriers to adopting practice software. While these concerns are legitimate, they are by no means insurmountable.*

**Cost:** While traditional practice software systems cost thousands of dollars, modern software solutions for allied health practitioners can cost as little as \$15 per month. And because many modern systems are cloud-based systems, they can be very easy to setup and require very little setup costs and investment in computer hardware.

**Privacy:** Using electronic health records does require an awareness of privacy principles and ensuring your records are safe. But in many cases, practice software is more secure than paper records and use of free email services such as Gmail. Find out more about privacy by visiting [the Australian Digital Health Agency privacy information page](#).

**Patient interaction:** Technology can be a barrier to patient interaction, but it doesn't have to be. Choosing the right technology is important to ensure you and your patient are comfortable. That might mean a tablet rather than a computer. Many practitioners also find ways to minimise the impact of technology through methods such as involving their patient in the process of entering information by discussing answers as they are entered or using the software to help show your patients how they are progressing towards their goals.



**Remember, while implementing practice software can seem like an enormous change, many allied health practitioners already use technology in a variety of ways: from emailing information to patients and practitioners, to sending appointment reminders with a smartphone, to using a computer or tablet to list appointments, manage account-keeping and to type out consultation notes.**