

Media release

14 June 2022

Hunter New England region leads the way with digital technology, reaching 100 000 electronic GP referrals.

The medical fax machine has all but entered retirement in the Hunter New England region, as electronic referrals increase in popularity between general practitioners and their service providers.

Since the launch of the SeNT eReferral system in June 2016, 100 000 referrals have been electronically transmitted to Hunter New England Local Health District and private health providers across the region, providing security, reducing errors and saving both administrative and clinical time.

The delivery of SeNT eReferrals is a component of the Integrated Care Enablers partnership between The PHN and Hunter New England Local Health District, which explores how digital health technology can be utilised to connect primary care and tertiary care, to deliver better health outcomes for our communities. It has a primary focus on connecting care through digital health and integrating the health system and will be used by The PHN to support and influence enhancements in digital health across all primary health care in the Hunter New England and Central Coast regions.

Hunter New England and Central Coast Primary Health Network (The PHN) CEO, Richard Nankervis said the milestone is a significant step towards achieving The PHN's digital health strategy "Since the pandemic began, we've experienced a significant increase in the availability and use of digital technologies in healthcare, including telehealth and My Health Record along with e-Referrals".

"Digital technology has the power to improve the lives of patients, communities and health care providers by creating efficiency, quality and safety in primary health care interventions and support enhanced preventative care."

"Our digital health strategy is centred on the growth of digital health capability and maturity across primary health care and highlights the integration elements required with our partners in the acute sector," said Mr Nankervis.

Several of our region's practices, including Mayfield Medical Connection and Appletree Family Practice; have each processed more than 2,500 SeNT eReferrals.

Hunter New England Health Chief Executive, Michael DiRienzo said the e-referral process was a key priority for the District and was pleased to have championed this for the benefit of patients.

"E-referrals ensure a streamlined process for accessing outpatient clinics and allow us to capture more detailed information to better assess and prioritise the needs of each patient. This then ensures referral to the right service and prompt patient triage," said Mr DiRienzo.

“Clinicians will benefit from these digital technologies that introduce new and efficient workflows, digitally-enabled models of care as well as improved patient access, sustainability and engagement. Consumers will see benefits through technologies that bring convenience, greater efficiency and enhanced preventative care.”

The clinical areas most popular with eReferrals include maternity (11481 eReferrals), gynaecology (7519 eReferrals) and gastroenterology (7349 eReferrals).

In addition to the success of SeNT eReferrals, key digital health achievements in the Hunter New England and Central Coast region include:

- **SeNT eReferrals:** Over 95% of eligible general practices are accessing the SeNT eReferral system with GPs delivering 100 000 eReferrals to over 450 local public and private healthcare services to date.
- **My Health Record:** Over 90% of general practices and community pharmacies, plus around 40% of private specialist practices with conformant clinical software, are connected to the My Health Record.
- **Secure Messaging:** Over 90% of general practices and increasing numbers of other primary health care practices use Secure Messaging to communicate patient information to other health care providers.

Watch how ePrescriptions have benefited practices in our region:

<https://youtu.be/aJ2jUO59wps>

<https://youtu.be/ra4QuLwly1I>

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For more information:

Rebecca Brennan, Communications and Public Relations Manager rbrennan@thephn.com.au 0437 478 138

The PHN works with health care providers across the Hunter, New England and Central Coast.

Through our innovative programs our communities benefit from greater coordination, better systems and improved access to health care.

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