

healthMessage

Secure Health Messaging

Background

HealthMessage has been developed to provide the health sector with an easy way of communicating with each other. Key features include:

- Secure - can be used to send identifiable clinical information about specific patients. All health information is sent securely - no health information is sent by e-mail.
- Fully integrated into primary care practice management systems (Medtech, Evolution, and My Practice).
- Supports dialogues with full thread tracking (including the message you are replying to in your reply), message forwarding etc.
- Any appropriate health organisation can participate - general practice, pharmacy, PHO-provided health services, DHB specialists, District Health Nurses, Maori Health Providers, NGOs etc.
- A centrally maintained directory of authorised users - individual users need not maintain their own contact lists.

Rationale

The system has been developed in response to a need expressed by the health sector to be able to easily have a secure, asynchronous dialogue with others in the health sector about a specific patient. This is expected to make a significant contribution to avoiding unnecessary referral and admission to hospital.

We already use “advice only” electronic referrals to ask questions of specialists within the hospital setting and the value of this has been well demonstrated. Using the e-referrals infrastructure for this does, however, have some limitations:

- E-referrals can be time-consuming to complete when a very simple question needs to be asked.
- You can’t have a dialogue (“reply to the reply”) or forward a response to someone else for further comment. It is a single question and response.
- It is currently restricted to GPs and hospital clinicians.
- A message cannot be initiated by hospital clinicians.

How it works - a GP or nurse sending a new message

1. The GP/nurse opens the “Health Message” form within their Practice Management System.
2. Any existing messages to or from anyone at the practice about the current patient are displayed (including messages sent to or from other practice staff about the current patient).
3. The user clicks on “New Message” to display a blank message, pre-populated with key demographic information about the current patient.
4. The user can optionally include medical warnings, problem lists, recent test results, and current medications within the message.
5. The user selects the recipient from a centrally maintained directory and presses “Send”.
6. The message is saved to the “Outbox” (or its equivalent) in the patient’s medical record.

7. The recipient gets an e-mail saying “You have received a new HealthMessage from [Sender’s name] of [Sender’s Organisation] - click [here](#) to view the message” (where “here” is a link that opens the HealthMessage website). The e-mail does not include any information about the patient.
8. When the recipient clicks on the link, they enter their user id and password, after which the message is displayed.
9. The user can then “reply” to or forward the message to another user.

How it works - the GP or nurse receiving a message

1. When the GP or nurse receives a message (which could be a reply or a new message initiated by someone else) the message is received directly into the Provider Inbox (or its equivalent) in the same way as test results, discharge summaries and the like.
2. The GP/nurse does not need to open anything to view the message - it is right there as plain text in the inbox. It can be filed into the patient’s inbox in the normal manner just like anything else received in this manner.
3. If the GP/nurse wants to reply or forward the message, they open the HealthMessage form and they will see the message and can view it, reply, or forward in the normal manner.

How it works for users who do not use Medtech, Evolution, or My Practice

1. These users login to HealthMessage via their Internet browser and can then view their messages, send a new message, or reply to/forward messages they have received.
2. Users can elect to see all messages that have been sent to or from the user’s organisation about a specific patient. So for example a specialist working at the hospital can see all messages sent to or from the hospital about the patient.

Security and Privacy

3. All information transmitted between the user and the server is encrypted (using https).
4. No health information is sent via e-mail.
5. All health information stored in the repository is encrypted.
6. Users who login through a browser must enter a user-id and strong password. All passwords are encrypted when stored within the server.

Integration into Primary Care Systems

7. Single-sign on has been implemented so the GP does not need to login or enter a password. HealthMessage authenticates that the system is being invoked from an authorised practice and uses the login to the practice management system to authenticate the individual user.
8. All messages sent are stored in the patient’s outbox.
9. All messages received are stored in the patient’s inbox.

What is needed to use HealthMessage?

At the most basic level, a user only needs access to the Internet and a browser.

GPs and nurses that use Medtech or Evolution will require an Advanced Forms License - most practices will already have this.

To achieve single-sign-on, practices will install an authorisation key that authenticates the practice to the Health Message server.

Practices then simply import a form in order to use Health Message.

Users also needed to be added to the centralised database of authorised users.

How do I get it?

Contact Ken Leech at Procon on 021 241 1522 or by e-mail at ken@procon.co.nz.