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Healthcare Identifiers essential for an integrated Australian health system

The Australian General Practice Network says that the Healthcare Identifier Bill being discussed in the senate tomorrow is an essential building block of an integrated eHealth system and must pass in order to unlock the benefits of a connected, patient centric health system for all Australians.

"Identifiers for individuals and health care providers are an essential first step in connecting up our health system and improving health outcomes for patients," said AGPN Chair Dr. Emil Djakic.

Dr. Djakic, a Tasmanian GP and national clinical adviser to the National E-Health Transition Authority (NEHTA) said that healthcare identifiers will help save lives by reducing medical errors resulting from incorrect information.

"While they don't themselves hold any clinical information at all, the identifiers allow us as clinicians to be certain that the right information is linked to the right patient.

"This means that when I receive a test result in my practice for a John Smith, I can be 100 percent certain that it is about the same John Smith that is sitting in my consulting room," Dr. Djakic said.

Significant support for the Healthcare Identifier Bill was expressed at AGPN's inaugural National eHealth Conference in Melbourne last week where eHealth experts, policy makers and implementers from across the health care sector discussed crucial eHealth issues such as the role eHealth plays in the health reform agenda.

"The AGPN eHealth conference was an excellent opportunity to hear from both the people on the ground and the people behind the policy in eHealth. There was a real feeling of positivity from both speakers and delegates around eHealth and a drive to 'get on with it' and start delivering better health outcomes for the consumer," Dr. Djakic said.

Dr. Djakic pointed out however that while an exciting opportunity, the Healthcare Identifiers Bill is but the first step in the development of a national eHealth system.

"We will really see the benefits these unique identifiers bring through the enhanced healthcare systems they enable for patients. Once you can identify a patient across the system and accurately match clinical records, safe and efficient patient referrals and discharge, and effective medication management become possible.

"The Network is already gearing up to help general practice and the broader primary health care sector adopt this crucial piece of eHealth infrastructure and take that next step in using this technology to improve health outcomes for their patients," he said.

For media interviews please phone David Butt, CEO on 0411 474 912