

National Rural Health Alliance E-forum – 3 August 2001

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AN AUSTRALIAN DOCTORS' PORTAL IS THE RIGHT PRESCRIPTION (Reprinted from The Interact Update, 29 July 2001)

E-health company Health Communication Network (HCN) has sealed a joint venture with Reed Business Information, which publishes Australian Doctor, to develop a portal site for GPs.

Australiandoctor.com.au will combine content from HCN's existing online services with daily news updates from Australian Doctor.

HCN hopes Australian doctors will make the site their home page soon after its launch.

The site will also contain medical decision support resources, access to clinical databases (Cochrane, Medline etc) and software support for HCN clinical and practice management products.

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SMALL TOWN RENEWAL OVERVIEW AND CASE STUDIES

The Rural Industries Research and Development Corporation has released a report on Small Town Renewal. The report draws on the experience of the growing number of rural communities, both within Australia and internationally, that have recognised the long term effects of population and service decline, and have opted not to merely cope with a declining quality of life, but to adapt, embrace change and begin to prosper.

The Executive Summary of the report is available at <http://www.rirdc.gov.au/reports/HCC/01-043sum.htm> and the full report at <http://www.rirdc.gov.au/reports/HCC/01-043.pdf>.

The associated handbook to generate action for community change and renewal by focussing on what communities are doing and can do is available at <http://www.rirdc.gov.au/reports/HCC/01-043Manual.pdf>

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Subject: 5th National Regional Australia Conference
From: Vicki Ledo Vicki.Ledo@unisa.edu.au

5th NATIONAL REGIONAL AUSTRALIA CONFERENCE

Connecting communities: an action approach.

25th - 27th September, 2002

Port Lincoln, South Australia

CALLS FOR EXPRESSION OF INTEREST

- ? What is creating change in regional communities?
- ? What works? Why does it work?
- ? Who's providing support?
- ? Who's not providing support?

There are relatively few forums in which Regional development and local government, Health and human resources, and Education workers can gather together and interact on a national basis, with an emphasis on remote, rural and regional communities. The 5th National Regional Australia Conference to be held in Pt. Lincoln SA will prove the opportunity. The Organising Committee invites interested parties to submit expressions of interest in attending and/or presenting papers and presentations in the areas of regional, rural or remote:

- ? economic & community development and local government;
- ? health and human resources;
- ? education.

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AMA WELCOMES DEFERRAL OF PROPOSAL FOR NATIONAL REGISTRATION OF DOCTORS

(Reprint of AMA Press Release 1 August 2001, available at <http://domino.ama.com.au/AMASWeb/MediaRel.nsf/Media?OpenView>)

The AMA welcomed today's decision by Health Ministers to defer the implementation of a national system of registration of medical practitioners pending wider community consultation including with the medical profession.

The decision to defer implementation was initiated by Federal Health and Aged Care Minister, Dr Michael Wooldridge, after the AMA wrote to Health Ministers expressing concern about the proposal under consideration.

Dr Dana Wainwright, Chair of the AMA's Economics and Workforce Committee, said today, "The AMA is strongly supportive of a system of registration that assures the public that medical practitioners are appropriately qualified and competent to practise. The AMA also strongly supports a registration system that is consistent across all jurisdictions and allows maximum portability at minimal cost.

"However we were concerned that the current proposal was being rushed through at very short notice and could have resulted in a number of potentially unintended consequences. Everyone in the community has a vital interest in who is able to practise as a doctor. We wanted the opportunity to ensure that both the public and medical profession were fully involved in the development of the registration system," Dr Wainwright said.

The AMA's concerns with the proposal before Health Ministers included:

- ? Potential restrictions that may be imposed on GPs in rural areas in continuing to provide a full range of medical services
- ? It was not clear whether some overseas trained doctors currently practising would continue to be fully registered
- ? How would doctors taking extended breaks (to travel overseas or for family reasons) be treated?
- ? That the proposal only provided for "mutual recognition" between States and Territories – meaning doctors who wanted to practise in more than one State would still need to apply and pay additional registration fees. The AMA prefers "portability" where, similar to your car driver licence, if you are registered in one State or Territory you are automatically entitled to practise in other States/Territories.
- ? Additional bureaucratic requirements that would be imposed on doctors in order to continue their registration without clear evidence that this would improve public safety.

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DEVELOPMENT OF HEALTHCONNECT COMMENDED
(Reprint of Media Release by Dr Wooldridge 1 August 2001 available at <http://www.health.gov.au/mediarel/yr2001/mw/mw01067.htm>)

Health Ministers welcomed the significant progress being made in the research and development phase of the proposed national health information network - HealthConnect. Speaking at the Australian Health Ministers Conference in Adelaide, Federal Health Minister, Dr Michael Wooldridge, said important steps had been taken toward establishing a world-class electronic system for collecting, storing and exchanging health records. "HealthConnect is an exciting concept with the potential to enhance the quality of care by revolutionising the way health records are managed," Dr Wooldridge said. "When implemented it will give health care providers and consumers instantaneous access to concise and accurate clinical information at the point of care, while ensuring individual privacy is protected," Dr Wooldridge said. Since health ministers last met in November 2000, developments have occurred in a number of key areas, including:

- ? the establishment of a joint Commonwealth, state and territory HealthConnect program office to manage the planning and development of the electronic network;
- ? the allocation of \$37 million by all governments to develop essential standards and establish exploratory projects and trial sites that will test components of HealthConnect; and
- ? the establishment of an Interim Board that includes government, consumer and provider representatives to oversee HealthConnect.

Over the next two years, HealthConnect will be subject to a comprehensive research and development phase where options for implementing HealthConnect will be tested and evaluated.

Work will also be undertaken to develop a robust privacy framework to underpin the operation of the network. A joint Commonwealth, state and territory Privacy Working Group has been established to oversee this work, including the development of a national health privacy code.

Information on HealthConnect can be found at <http://www.health.gov.au/healthonline/connect.htm>.

Media Contact:

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WOOLDRIDGE FAILS ON E-HEALTH - ALPooldrige Fails On E-Health – ALP
 (Reprint of media statement issued on 30 July 2001 by Ms Jenny Macklin, Shadow Minister for Health, available at <http://www.alp.org.au/media/0701/jmmsbmms300701.html>)

The Health Minister, Michael Wooldridge has failed to introduce draft legislation designed to establish electronic medication records, Ms Jenny Macklin, Shadow Minister for Health said today.

The Better Medication Management System (BMMS) Bill will not be introduced into Parliament this year after being rejected unanimously by the Minister's own stakeholder Development Group at a recent meeting due to concerns about privacy and lack of detail.

"The Minister has had over a year to get it right but his failure to understand the priorities of the Australian public - the need for comprehensive privacy protection and complete transparency - has resulted in further unnecessary delays in introducing E-Health to Australia," Ms Macklin said.

"Labor has publicly stated its support for the use of electronic health initiatives to improve health outcomes, however, it has also made it clear that such initiatives can only be successful if issues related to privacy are dealt with first.

"In putting the cart before the horse, this Health Minister has seriously compromised the potential for electronic health to be successfully introduced in this country.

"This Bill exposed the Howard Government's plans to eventually hand over management of sensitive health data to private companies. This is unacceptable to patients and it is unacceptable to Labor.

"The lack of detail in the legislation which placed the ability to make crucial decisions about the day to day running of the BMMS in the hands of a ministerially appointed Board and out of the public arena again shows this Government to be "tricky" and secretive.

"This new electronic health record was supposed to be active as of 1 July this year and now there isn't even any legislation in place because this Health Minister and the Howard Government just do not listen to the Australian public," Ms Macklin said.

According to Government budget figures the new system was expected to generate \$25 million in savings during the first four years of operation.

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NATIONAL UNDERGRADUATE RURAL HEALTH CONFERENCE

The National Undergraduate Rural Health Conference is the annual conference of the National Rural Health Network (NRHN), the peak organisation representing the interests of undergraduate students in all health disciplines. It is concerned with rural health issues and education in rural, remote and Aboriginal Torres Strait Islander health at undergraduate and postgraduate level. NRHN is a member of the National Rural Health Alliance. The 2000 Conference was convened by TROHPIQ, Queensland's Rural Health Organisation for students. The location for the 2000 Conference was the University of Southern Queensland, Toowoomba, Qld and was held between 9 - 13 September 2000. The Conference was attended by approximately 200 student and 40 academic and profession delegates.

The conference theme "Bringing it all Together" represented the need to draw together the diverse aspects of rural health care and to act on them through taking stock, looking ahead, and moving forward. Through the hard work of the delegates and the quality of the presentations of the speakers at the conference, some of the objectives are currently well progressed.

All of the Conference Proceedings can be found at <http://www.nrhn.org/reports/5th-NURHC> which contains all available presentations plus summaries of discussions and supporting papers.

NURHC 2001
6th National Undergraduate Rural Health Conference
22 – 26 September 2001
Tasman Peninsula, Tasmania

Website: <http://www.ruralhealth.utas.edu.au/nurhc-2001>

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INTERNATIONAL RURAL AND REMOTE ALLIED HEALTH PROFESSIONALS CONFERENCE

The International Rural & Remote Allied Health Professionals Conference is to be held in Cairns from 30 August to 1 September 2001.

This conference is a collaboration between Services for Australian Rural and Remote Allied Health (SARRAH), and the North Queensland Rural Health Training Unit (NQRHTU), Queensland Health. The conference will run over three days with additional pre and post conference workshops. The program will feature lecture style presentations, discussion

forums, discipline specific and multidisciplinary clinical workshops, and exhibits of products relevant to various allied health professions.

For details, contact the Alliance at:

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CONTRIBUTION AND SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION AND DISCLAIMER

The NRHA e-forum is a forum for the expression of YOUR views. Contributions are sought on any topic relevant to rural health concerns. Please send contributions to the moderator, Jim Groves, at grovesc@winshop.com.au.

The NRHA e-forum is edited by a third party moderator, Jim Groves. As such, the Alliance does not control postings and the contents do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Alliance. Nor do postings necessarily reflect the view of Jim Groves or any organisation he is associated with. Jim Groves can be contacted at grovesc@winshop.com.au.

The e-forum is sent to a mailing list of the Alliance and those have indicated interest through the subscription box at the NRHA Web site (<http://www.ruralhealth.org.au>). This issue is going to 1,160 recipients. Please forward a copy to any colleague you think may be interested.

To subscribe, send a message saying "subscribe NRHA eforum" to grovesc@winshop.com.au. To unsubscribe, send a message saying "unsubscribe NRHA eforum" to grovesc@winshop.com.au.