



Media release

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International collaboration on digital health best practice supports global response to COVID-19 pandemic

Four reports – White Papers – have been published by the Global Digital Health Partnership (GDHP) of over 30 nations including Australia detailing what GDHP member countries are doing to deliver digital health services and improve patient health outcomes.

The GDHP is currently chaired by India. Mr Lav Agarwal, Joint Secretary, Ministry of Health and Family Welfare, Government of India is the GDHP Secretariat Lead.

Mr Agarwal said “Sharing digital health information is now more important than ever as individual nations and the global community respond to the challenges of the COVID-19 pandemic.”

“These White Papers will provide both participant and non-participant countries and territories with guidance on the key digital health enablers that can lead in improving the health and well-being of citizens at national and sub-national levels through the best use of evidence-based digital technologies.”

The reports provide insights, guidance and information on cutting edge digital innovation for digital health workers, governments and organisations providing digital health services, and the communities they serve across the globe.

They are a valuable source of information that provide a catalyst for positive change, with insights and international comparisons of our digital health systems with countries around the world.

One key trend of GDHP members’ digital health systems are efforts to empower citizens to have greater involvement in the management of their own healthcare. This is evidenced in Australia in [statistics](#) published by the Australian Digital Health Agency which show consumers are uploading and viewing more of their My Health Record documents.

Chief Medical Adviser at the Agency and Chair of the Evidence and Evaluation work stream for the GDHP, Clinical Professor Meredith Makeham, said the Agency had supported and led the development of the White Papers over the past year, working with more than 30 countries from around the world.

“International collaboration is critical to improving health outcomes for all,” she said.

“Many countries and territories are still at the beginning of their digital health journey, so providing insights in key areas of common interest through our GDHP participation is fundamentally beneficial and supports our goals to improve health and well-being for people.”

“Our experiences with the COVID-19 pandemic have highlighted the importance of international engagement, and the critical role that digital health technologies play in ensuring that people have access to their healthcare providers and services. Digital health has never been more important.”

“I want to highlight the role Australia has played in establishing the GDHP as the inaugural Chair of the partnership and host of its first summit in early 2018. Since then we’ve benefitted from the opportunity to share valuable insights on digital health service delivery for our citizens that have been informed by the cutting-edge work of GDHP participants around the world,” she said.



Comments from other GDHP Work Stream Chairs:

Dr Don Rucker, National Coordinator for Health IT, US Department of Health and Human Services said “Sharing information using health data standards for interoperability is necessary to advance public health reporting and research which are key parts of an evidence-driven response to pandemics. Now, more than ever, increasing collaboration and sharing best practices around the world, not just within countries and territories, is critical to advance interoperability together globally.”

Shelagh Maloney, Executive Vice President, Engagement and Marketing, Canada Health Infoway and Chair Clinical and Consumer Engagement work stream said “Over the last decade there has been a universal shift in thinking; one where there was little to no support for providing citizens with access to their information, to present day, where we are accelerating efforts to provide citizens access to information in an equitable and secure manner. As governments around the world grapple with this new reality, and citizens in many jurisdictions are asked to remain home for public health, it has never been more critical for citizens to access their health information remotely: wherever and whenever it’s needed.”

The four [GDHP White Papers](#) are:

- ***Advancing Interoperability Together Globally***
- ***Citizen Access to Digital Health***
- ***Benefits Realisation: Sharing insights***
- ***Foundational Capabilities Framework & Assessment***

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About the Australian Digital Health Agency

The Agency is tasked with improving health outcomes for all Australians through the delivery of digital healthcare systems, and implementing [Australia’s National Digital Health Strategy](#) – *Safe, Seamless, and Secure: evolving health and care to meet the needs of modern Australia* in collaboration with partners across the community. The Agency is the System Operator of [My Health Record](#), and provides leadership, coordination, and delivery of a collaborative and innovative approach to utilising technology to support and enhance a clinically safe and connected national health system. These improvements will give individuals more control of their health and their health information, and support healthcare providers to deliver informed healthcare through access to current clinical and treatment information. Further information: www.digitalhealth.gov.au.