

General Practice Cost/Benefits Analysis for Using Secure Messaging

SEA-GP (Brisbane) Australian Better Health Initiative (ABHI)
Change Management Working Group – November 2008

The benefits of secure email and secure messaging include:

Fast message delivery

Reduced handling - Traditionally mail opened, sorted, placed into GP mail-box, read / actioned, sent to nurse or receptionist for action or scanning. Often sits in scanning pile for 2-3 days. Process subject to delays and less rigorous than secure email.

Electronic mail read and actioned by GP, incorporated into electronic record. Sender receives message about message receipt.

Guaranteed message delivery (reduces resending of information, duplication of effort, wasted time in chasing up receipt of documents/referrals)

Ability to use information contained in document and comment on information and generate response, rather than generate a new letter/report

Reduced hard disc storage space (by 8-10 times), less backup time, memory requirement. (*Costs of hardware and hard disc space*)

Potential to reduce GP time through reducing the need to re-key clinical information through the use of HL7 structured messaging and coding to ensure transfer of consistent clinical meaning. Major barrier at present to having an up-to-date record i.e. updating problem list, medications, recall information.

Improved clinical data management which reduces clinical errors and directly contributes to better patient care. It is much easier to transfer more comprehensive clinical information to the other health care professionals involved in the patients care, directly improving the level of patient care.

Based on a 4 GP Practice

Savings	Per week	Per annum
Stationary (not including printer costs)		
Cost saving (save money on faxes, stamps and follow-up phone calls).	\$50	\$2,600
GP, RN and Practice Staff time savings		
Saving in staff time for scanning – 30 staff hours per week.	\$500	\$26,000
Ability to use information contained in document and comment on information and generate response, rather than generate a new letter/report.	\$50	\$2,600
Savings - Total	\$600	\$31,200
Costs		
Costs of setting up secure email and Medical Objects		
Training – minimal additional training required to use Trinity referral client. However, ongoing training is required for both GPs and practice staff to show them how to use the software to its full advantage.		\$4,000
Costs - Total		\$4,000
Financial summary		
Cost per annum		\$4,000
Savings per annum		\$31,200
Overall saving		\$27,200

Notes:

- Additional operating procedures – No extra Cost.
- Contingency for software/hardware outages - No extra Cost.
- There are more time savings if **HL7 complaint clinical software** is used – many patient details are inserted and managed automatically saving time and reducing likelihood of errors in re-entering patient details.
- Potential to reduce GP time through reducing the need to re-key clinical information through the use of HL7 structured messaging and coding to ensure transfer of consistent clinical meaning. Major barrier at present to having an up-to-date record i.e. updating problem list, medications, recall information. This could equate to \$50-100 daily per GP, RN (Potential to save 30mins daily).

Assumptions:

1. **Computer hardware and software** – no additional hardware or software costs, apart from installation of the Trinity referral client. Download client already in use in 72% of SEA-GP General Practices.
2. **Subscription to Internet Service Provider (ISP)** - covered already by existing secure email traffic, radiology, pathology, and internet access. Majority of practices using broadband (estimated 70% of practices, 50% registered in 2007 with “Broadband for Health” initiative, which provided an initial subsidy).

Authors

Drs Russell Hunter and Peter Adkins

General Practitioners and members of SEA-GP (Brisbane) Australian Better Health Initiative Change Management Working Group.

Disclaimer: Whilst every effort is made to ensure accuracy, SEA-GP (Brisbane) Ltd and/or the author(s) do not accept any liability for any injury, loss or damage incurred by or reliance on the information contained within this information sheet.