

My Health Record improving outcomes for people in palliative care

Australians are being encouraged to include My Health Record in the discussion of 'What Matters Most?' during National Palliative Care Week for 20 -26 May.

What matters most for a lot of people is being able to take control of their own health and their digital health information. My Health Record is an online summary of your key health information, which is controlled by the individual, allowing health care providers involved in a person's care to securely share health information. For people who require palliative care, this takes a lot of the pressure off.

While most people think palliative care to be just for those in their last days of their illness, Palliative Care Australia CEO Liz Callaghan said that palliative care is not just care provided in the final stages of life, but helps those affected to live well with a terminal illness.

"People accessing palliative care services often have complex needs and their care team includes many health professionals including pharmacists, doctors, nurses, and allied health professionals. My Health Record makes it easier for those professionals to share information about medications, test results, and care plans.

"Australians can also share their advance care planning documents through their My Health record, ensuring all health professionals know what their wishes for their future care are," Ms Callaghan said.

Agency Chief Clinical Information Officer and Executive General Manager Dr Monica Trujillo said palliative care is for people of any age who have been told that they have a serious illness that cannot be cured; it's about assisting in managing symptoms and improving quality of life.

"For some people, palliative care may be beneficial from the time of diagnosis with a serious life-limiting illness. Palliative care can be given alongside treatments given by doctors and members of the treating team. Having a My Health Record means all medical practitioners and treating team can be kept up to date.

"My Health Record can enable important health information including allergies, medical conditions, medicines, pathology and imaging reports to be accessed through one system. The benefits could include reduced hospital admissions, reduced duplication of tests, better coordination of care for people with chronic and complex conditions, and better informed treatment decisions," Dr Trujillo said.

Carers Australia CEO Ara Cresswell said My Health Record can also assist with carers or loved ones who want to assist the patient going through palliative care.

"My Health Record can lessen the stress of having to remember details of the diagnoses and treatments of others, and help prevent adverse medication events. The ability to upload the patient's end-of-life preferences can also lessen the distress of those forced into making very difficult decisions on behalf of a family member not able to communicate their own wishes." A My Health Record will be created for every Australian, unless they choose not to have one. The opt out period will run from 16 July to 15 October 2018. Records will then be created for interested Australians by the end of the year.

For further information visit www.myhealthrecord.gov.au or call 1800 723 471.

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