

MEDIA RELEASE



Friday 16 September 2011

Patient controlled e-health records: Better support needed to ensure rural uptake

The Rural Doctors Association of Australia (RDAA) has warned that rural practices will need adequate support to ensure the success of a Patient Controlled Electronic Health Records (PCEHR) system in the bush.

RDAA was responding to comments made this week by the Federal Health Minister, Nicola Roxon, that at this stage no special rebate will be paid to doctors to cover their time in creating health summaries for PCEHRs.

RDAA wrote to the Minister earlier this month advising that, without such a rebate, many rural practices will find it difficult to meet the challenges associated with implementing a PCEHR system.

“RDAA supports the PCEHR as a means of making important patient information available to doctors working in different locations and with different systems” acting RDAA President, Dr Nola Maxfield, said.

“This is particularly relevant for rural patients who are most likely to be transferred away from their local community in the event of a medical emergency or serious illness.

“However, we have a number of concerns about the likely uptake of the PCEHR system in rural and remote areas.

“Many rural doctors are already working long hours and struggle to keep their practices economically viable. Given this, they may be reluctant to participate in the PCEHR system without appropriate incentives for the time they will have to spend creating and updating the electronic records.

“In recognition of this issue, RDAA urges the Federal Government to consider introducing incentives to compensate for the time incurred in this new system, and to encourage the uptake of PCEHR, particularly in rural and remote areas. This should include the introduction of Medicare items claimable for creating or updating a health summary.

“RDAA supports the PCEHR initiative and will continue to work with the Federal Government and relevant authorities to promote its widespread adoption by rural doctors,” Dr Maxfield said.

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