



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE
Fri 17/12/04 11:00AM

Your health records in record time!

SMEs can play a pivotal role in the growth of an Australian electronic health industry and market, according to a new GAP report.

Computing systems have revolutionised our working lives and leisure time, yet integrated IT solutions have been surprisingly slow to penetrate the medical world. The Global Access Partners' forum on '*Better Health Care Through Electronic Information*', held in September at Sydney's NSW Trade & Investment Centre and the Garvan Institute of Medical Research, highlighted the partnership of Government and private sector in building a secure national 'Electronic Health Record' (EHR) for every patient in the country to cut costs, reduce errors and waste, and improve the quality of care.

The scheme, currently moving from R & D into implementation in South Australia, Tasmania and the Northern Territory, will eventually link health professionals in Australia's 50,000 disparate health organisations, allowing practitioners to instantly and securely access and share information regarding a patient's condition, medication and history and immediate and long term needs.

A successful EHR project in Alberta, Canada, along with a Pharmaceutical Information System, suggests that several hundred million dollar savings on Australia's spiralling pharmacy bill are possible, with the administrative burden on highly trained medical staff greatly eased and the number of needlessly duplicated medical tests dramatically reduced when results are available at the touch of a button. Fewer than 5% of patients consume more than 50% of care, and health experts agree EHR could transform the efficiency and effectiveness of their treatment.

The Department of Health & Ageing and State governments are encouraging IT companies to design improved products into national projects such as HealthConnect and a second-generation Medicare card, with the savings achieved in primary care projected to cover the costs of adoption in five years.

In the near future, it is hoped such smart systems will link GPs, hospitals and health providers to integrate patient records, medication and administration. They will save scarce medical resources, patient waiting time and taxpayer's money, allow the tracking of individuals through our complex network of medical providers, facilitate the gathering of data to improve medical targeting while all the time protecting patient confidentiality to an extent impossible today.

Full text of the **GAP Forum report** can be reviewed at www.globalaccesspartners.org/ehr_report.pdf
Media contact: Olga Bodrova - (02) 8303 2416; olga@globalaccesspartners.org