

Information Update: Health Practitioner Index

From the Ministry of Health's Information Directorate

March 2008

Health Practitioner Index Data is now Available for the Health Sector Information Systems

Starting this month (March 2008), the Ministry of Health's national Health Practitioner Index (HPI) is able to provide health practitioner data to the health sector. This means that health professional registration agencies (termed 'Responsible Authorities') and other health organisations with signed Data Access Deeds can start receiving central, trusted source health practitioner data, including unique practitioner identifiers, from the HPI.

This announcement represents a major step forward towards delivering against Action Zone 3 of the Health Information Strategy for New Zealand (2005)¹. Having just the one unique identifier, rather than the range of practitioner identifiers assigned by the different Responsible Authorities, will improve the identification of health practitioners. This further assists in ensuring the privacy and security of patient information.

Brendan Kelly, Chief Advisor – Health Information Strategy and Policy, says, 'We are delighted that the HPI is now up and running – it's a major step towards replacing the numerous health practitioner identifiers out there in the sector. It has required major effort and commitment from the Ministry, the Responsible Authorities, and all others involved'.

Speaking of the benefits, Brendan Kelly adds, 'At the heart of HPI implementation is the need to appropriately and securely link-up health practitioners to enable them to deliver better, more patient-centred care for the benefit of New Zealanders'.

Responsible Authorities are in the process of issuing the new HPI practitioner unique identifiers to their practitioner registrants. At this stage, until further notice, practitioners will not be required to quote their HPI practitioner identifier.

Also at this time, the Ministry (New Zealand Health Information Service (NZHIS)) is in the process of establishing the two additional separate HPI identifiers that describe the practitioner's organisation (employer) and facility (the physical address where the health service is delivered).

Through future targeted communications over the next few years, health organisations will be encouraged to upgrade their information systems to incorporate HPI identifiers and data.

Reference

1. Ministry of Health. 2005. Health Information Strategy for New Zealand. Wellington: Ministry of Health. Available at: www.moh.govt.nz.

Sound 'Bytes' from the Sector...

Michael Furlong, Project Manager – TestSafe, Health Alliance, explains how HPI data has helped the implementation of phase 2 of the TestSafe System:

The system was set up to allow health providers and community laboratories within the three Auckland DHBs to securely exchange and share patient laboratory results. The implementation of phase 2 extends the access of health providers to include GPs. The HPI system provides data in the form of Oracle files that the TestSafe System uses to authenticate GPs. Although the phase 2 rollout is in its early stages, with a small number of GP users, Mr Furlong is positive about the progress made so far.

Michael Furlong says, 'Historically, it had been difficult to agree a privacy and confidentiality framework for systems. Having a trusted source of health practitioner data for user authentication is a significant advancement towards this.'

Tim Gardner, Rural GP, Outram, Otago, says:

'I'm really looking forward to a robust, trusted system of practitioner, facility and organisation identification that can reduce the number of identifiers I currently need, and act as a secure authentication tool. This will allow accurate tracing of lab results, enable e-prescriptions, and act as an important building block for safe transfer of clinical information (including complete electronic record transfer). The answer here is the HPI – bring it on!'

Chris Dever, CIO Canterbury DHB, says:

'The HPI identifiers will eventually replace the multitude of practitioner identifiers used in the various health IT systems. The components of the HPI identify not just the person, but also the context in which they are operating, for instance, identifying if lab results should go to the hospital or to the consultant's room. Having the one unique identifier to identify each practitioner in all our systems will save time, reduce administrative costs and improve patient safety.'

Frequently Asked Questions on the Health Practitioner Index

For a fuller list of FAQs, visit www.nzhis.govt.nz. For further information you can contact the Data Management Services Manager, Alicia Webb, at alicia_webb@nzhis.govt.nz

Why do we need an HPI?

Various health organisations maintain their own practitioner indexes, which results in duplication of effort and potential inconsistencies. Having one national index will address these issues, and in addition will:

- provide an identification mechanism for health practitioners, including their practicing status
- enable the secure transfer of information between health practitioners, such as required for referrals, discharge summaries and laboratory results
- improve the privacy and security of patient information.

Who has an HPI practitioner identifier?

It is planned that any health practitioner registered with any of the Responsible Authority listed in the Health Practitioner Competence Assurance (HPCA) Act will have an HPI practitioner identifier. As health organisations are added to the HPCA Act, registrants of those organisations will be added to the HPI.

The HPI system is in the process of assigning HPI identifiers for practitioners from the Responsible Authorities that have signed a Data Provision Agreement and successfully provided test data on the HPI. At the time of writing, these are the Medical Council of New Zealand, Pharmacy Council of New Zealand, Dental Council of New Zealand, Midwifery Council, Physiotherapy Board and Occupational Therapy Board.

If you are an eligible health practitioner and have not yet received your HPI number, you will do so in due course. However, if you have any questions, you should contact your Responsible Authority.

What are the formats of the HPI identifiers?

The HPI comprises three separate indexes in the following formats:

- Practitioner - HPI-CPN (Common Person Number), eg 12ABCD
- Organisation - HPI-ORG, eg GA1234
- Facility - HPI-FAC, eg FB1032.

Where does the HPI practitioner data come from?

Data is provided by health practitioner Responsible Authorities who have signed a Data Provision Agreement with the Ministry of Health.

What practitioner data is held on the HPI system?

For each health practitioner, the HPI system contains the unique identifier, name, registrations, qualifications, scope of practice, conditions on practice, and in some cases contact details.

Who do I contact if my data is out of date?

Please contact your Responsible Authority if your data needs to be updated. Processes are also in place within the Ministry to feedback detected data inaccuracies to the Responsible Authorities.

Who has access to HPI practitioner data?

Health organisations with a signed Data Access Deed with the Ministry will be able to access HPI data.

Responsible Authorities, who provide the source data, have access to HPI data pertaining to their own registrants only.

It is possible that the Responsible Authorities may restrict access by other health organisations to certain data attributes or to certain organisation types only.

What is the timescale for sector information systems to incorporate HPI data?

National systems and collections held by NZHIS will be upgraded to use HPI identifiers from 1 July 2009. However, the new mental health collection (PRIMHD) will use HPI identifiers from 1 July 2008.

HealthPAC systems will manage the change over at a later timeframe.

It is expected that sector systems will be upgraded to use HPI identifiers over the next few years.

Who is responsible for the governance of the HPI?

The Sector Advisory Governance Group, which includes:

- Chief Advisor – Health Information Strategy & Policy, NZHIS (Chairperson)
- Responsible Authority representatives (3) – Midwives, Nursing Council and Medical Council
- ACC Representative
- DHB CIOs (2) – Hutt Valley and Canterbury
- Data Management Services Manager, NZHIS
- HPI Sector Integration Project Manager, NZHIS
- Group Manager, HealthPAC
- Ministry's Identity Management Workstream representative
- User representative
- DHBNZ representative
- Independent advisor.

How are the privacy rights of practitioners protected?

Responsible Authorities are at varying stages of notifying their member practitioners of the data being made available to the HPI and to whom it will be disclosed. The Ministry has developed a Privacy Impact Assessment, covering the privacy aspects of provision and use of data on the HPI, and a Voluntary Code of Practice.

Documents are available at www.nzhis.govt.nz.

Who do I contact if I have privacy concerns about the HPI?

In the first instance, please contact your Responsible Authority. If you have a complaint about use of disclosure of information identifying you, then this should be directed to the Office of the Privacy Commissioner.

For more information go to: www.nzhis.govt.nz.