

New Zealand ePrescription Service – Vendor Update

18 January 2011

An update on progress of the national ePrescription service trials

A project is underway to introduce electronic prescribing into New Zealand. This project will initially trial a community ePrescription Service (the NZ ePrescription Service) before national roll out.

The trial will take place in a number of geographic locations around New Zealand over a period of 12 months. Vendors of GP and pharmacy systems will be invited to participate in the trial.

Background

Electronic prescribing has long been identified as a goal to improve efficiency and safety in the health system. Previously part of the ePharmacy Action Zone in the Health Information Strategy for New Zealand, it is now a priority in the National Health IT Plan. One hurdle that had slowed progress to date is the need to work within the current legislation that a prescriber must physically sign a script in order for it to be a valid prescription.

Over the past few years, progress has focussed on developing the standards necessary to enable the smooth transfer of medicines information between GP and pharmacy systems. One example of this is the business process and messaging standards for community based ePrescriptions, which received approval from the Health Information Standards Organisation in 2008. Another example is the Medicines Terminology, or the New Zealand Universal List of Medicines, which received approval from the Health Information Standards Organisation in 2009 and is currently released for evaluation (www.nzulm.org.nz).

The ePrescription service, which was proposed and agreed among the stakeholders:

- allows a script to be electronically sent by a prescriber's system to a 'transaction broker';
- provides the patient with a signed, barcoded paper prescription script (which meets the requirements of the current legislation);
- allows a pharmacist to electronically download a prescription from the 'transaction broker', populate their system with the details, verify the request and dispense against it (typically when the patient presents with the paper script);
- sends status updates to the prescriber, if requested, when the prescription is picked up;
- sends the prescribing and dispensing transactions to a regional clinical data repository as appropriate;
- allows pharmacy generated prescriptions to be electronically sent a prescribers system, where this is required;
- allows a prescriber to cancel a prescription.

Stakeholder meetings

At meetings hosted jointly by the National Health IT Board and the Safe Medications Management Programme (previously part of Quality Improvement Committee programme of work and now part of the Health Quality and Safety Commission) and held in August and October 2010, key prescribing, pharmacy and funding stakeholders from across the Health and Disability Sector discussed the need for and benefits of a national ePrescription service.

The Group (refer Appendix 1) agreed that there were clear benefits from the service for all stakeholder groups, and confirmed their support for the service. They discussed and agreed the high-level scope of a national ePrescription service, priorities for implementation, roles of stakeholders, governance of the project, funding and next steps.

The Group agreed to a trial and national roll-out approach. Trials will test the transactions / workflow between GP and community pharmacy systems and will take place in two Safe Medications Management Programme centres of excellence for medication management, being Taranaki and Counties Manukau / Waitemata. Expressions of interest for up to two more trial locations will be requested. These expressions of interest will need to be supported by their local community GP and Pharmacy representatives and well as the DHB.

Current Status

A project team has been formed to manage the NZ ePrescription Service trial. This project will be partly funded by the National IT Health Board, with additional funding being sought from members of the stakeholder group.

The National Health IT Board in conjunction with the national Safe Medications Management Programme commissioned the National Institute for Health Innovation (NIHI) to carry out an evaluation of potential vendors for the trial of the transaction broking part of the NZ Prescription service. An Expression of Interest invitation was released to the sector and subsequently responded to by five suppliers. A NIHI evaluation panel reduced this to three vendors, who were then subject of a detailed technical evaluation and presented to a full Evaluation Panel.

Each company spent half a day with a NIHI technical team, looking at such aspects of their solution as security, architecture and integration. They then presented to the full panel, comprising community pharmacy, GP, PHO and funding and planning representatives.

The Evaluation Panel was unanimous in recommending Simpl to the NHITB as the preferred option to carry out the trial for the ePrescription transaction brokering service. They have implemented a similar service in Australia and many of the team that worked on the Australian implementation are NZ based and will work on the NZ implementation.

Work is underway to finalise the scope, deliverables, timeframes etc for the trial.

The project is aiming to launch the trial by March 2011. This will start in one geographic location and be extended further during the course of the trial. There will be ongoing consultation with vendors and the broader sector to refine the functionality through the various phases of the trial.

Vendors will be invited to participate, at various stages, to ensure we achieve a robust and functional national solution that receives widespread support.

Governance

The NZePS stakeholder group is an interim (project) governance group. Ongoing governance of the NZePS service will be determined by the National IT Health Board.

Management of the NZePS project is the responsibility of Patients First, a joint venture between the Royal College of GPs and GPNZ.

Key Contacts

The primary contact for vendors is Andre Bredenkamp. For more information, contact Andre Bredenkamp at andre.bredenkamp@patientsfirst.co.nz.

Appendix: Membership of the Group

- National IT Health Board – Graeme Osborne, Tony Cooke
- DHB Funding and Planning – Tim Wood
- GPNZ – Bev O’Keefe, Fiona Thomson, Andrew Terris
- National Health IT Board – Graeme Osborne
- PHARMAC – Rachel MacKay
- Pharmaceutical Society – Richard Townley, Euan Galloway
- Pharmacy Guild – Annabel Young
- Royal NZ College of GP – Andrew Stenson
- Radius Pharmacies – Mike Seymour
- Safe Medication Management Programme and NZ Universal List of Medicines – Chris Fleming, Paul Cressey, Shayne Hunter
- Pharmacy Brands – Alan Wham