

NEWS

E-health blueprint leaves out trials

AUSTRALIA: The role of e-health records in clinical trials is noticeably absent from a new blueprint on the subject released for consultation last week by the Australian Health Minister, despite a series of recommendations recently accepted by the Government.

Last month, all recommendations from a report by the Government's Clinical Trials Action Group (CTAG) were accepted including a request that the "National E-Health Transition Authority (NEHTA) and state and territory governments make the clinical research system a key consideration when designing, developing and implementing e-health standards, specifications, strategies, frameworks, systems and programs".

Medicines Australia CEO, Brendan Shaw, says the document is a draft blueprint, and hopes the final version will carefully detail the potential benefits of e-health for clinical trials.

"MA will be making a submission to that effect," Dr Shaw said.

"It is critical that the Government deliver on its commitment to implement the recommendations of the CTAG report by July 2011. That report clearly recommended the establishment of an e-health network to assist clinical trial recruitment.

"Using e-health to enhance clinical trial capability will make Australia more internationally competitive, we have an opportunity to use e-health as a novel competitive advantage," he said.

Anna Lavelle, CEO of AusBiotech, says she is disappointed to see that clinical trials were not considered in the e-health records blueprint.

"AusBiotech has been advocating for the timely implementation of an e-health platform that will allow national access to patient records for the purposes of clinical trials and enable secure remote access to trial monitors," Dr Lavelle said.

She said AusBiotech is considering its options in regard to a submission, and will continue dialogue with CTAG. She added that, ideally, clinical trials need to be included in the planning phases of e-health records, as retrospective application may present issues.

The CTAG report says that although the NEHTA does not currently have a specific remit to incorporate clinical trials information needs into the e-health system, "there are key initiatives which could be pursued by NEHTA which will ensure that clinical trials needs are designed into the national system, thereby providing much improved efficiencies in trial conduct".