

11 August 2015

Ms Fiona Buffinton
Deputy Secretary – Acting
Ageing and Aged Care
Department of Social Services
Email: MyAgedCare@dss.gov.au

Dear Ms Buffinton,

Re: MyAgedCare.gov.au referral system

The Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) is Australia's largest professional general practice organisation representing over 30,000 members working in or towards a career in general practice. Our members have raised a number of concerns regarding the recently launched MyAgedCare website (www.myagedcare.gov.au) and its online referral system for Aged Care Assessment Team assessments and Home Care Package referrals. The key concerns are:

- **No option is provided to send referrals electronically via an electronic communication system that conforms to the national Secure Message Delivery (SMD) system standard.**

Most general practices are heavily if not fully computerised and neither make nor keep any records on paper. They do not want to write on paper or to receive paper from anybody else.

The Government's policy is to use electronic communications, as announced on 12th May 2015 by the Hon Malcolm Turnbull MP, Minister for Communications (<http://tiny.cc/9aoe1x>): "The Government is investing \$254.7 million in the Digital Transformation Agenda to drive innovation and make it easier for individuals and businesses to access government services. Of the money allocated, \$95.4 million will be used to establish the Digital Transformation Office (DTO) to ensure that all new and redesigned government services are simpler and easier to use and can be completed from start to finish online."

To be useable in the context of general practice, online methods of communication must link to or integrate with GPs' electronic clinical and administrative systems, to eliminate the need to manually re-enter information that is already held in the GP's electronic clinical and administrative system and/or in the government's system.

- **Fax referral option**
The closest that MyAgedCare gets to electronic communication is to give the option for GPs and other healthcare providers to fax through referrals, but the fax number is not clearly displayed anywhere throughout the website.
- **The 'Make a referral' form**
The form requires information to be entered which is duplicate of information already available on the referral template within a GPs clinical software system. The online form is split into three sections, with minimal mandatory fields in each. The option to upload a document, such as Clinical notes, is not until on the third section.

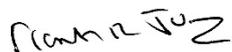
In light of the concerns raised, the RACGP recommends the following to the DSS.

- **My Aged Care website be equipped immediately to receive referrals via electronic communication systems that conform to the national Secure Message Delivery system standard.**
These systems are already in wide use by general practitioners and other health professionals and are available immediately off the shelf. These systems enable and facilitate two way communication between My Aged Care and referrers.
- **Referral fax information is displayed more visibly on and throughout the website, with clear instructions to those who chose to use the option of faxing through the referral.**
MyAgedCare accepts referrals via fax, however, the fax number is not published anywhere on the website. The RACGP supports SMD as the preferred communications standard between healthcare providers and does not encourage the use of fax communications.
- **The option to upload a document to the online referral form is made available on the first section.**
This will alleviate the rigmarole of GPs filling out duplicate information they already have on their clinical system referral template.
- **Create an option for the 'make a referral' form to be printed to PDF once completed online.**
This would enable the document to be added to the patient record in a clinical system.

The RACGP has a strong history of being at the forefront of innovations in the health sector and we have a dedicated expert committee and business unit on eHealth. We are ideally placed to guide governments and other stakeholders to ensure they are informed of what is reasonable, workable and useful for general practitioners in Australia when implementing new eHealth initiatives. We would be happy to work with you in finding workable solutions to the current issues with the referral system on the MyAgedCare website.

Should you require any additional information please feel free to contact Ms Joanne Hereward, Program Manager, eHealth on 03 8699 0338 or via email to joanne.hereward@racgp.org.au

Yours sincerely



Dr Frank R Jones
President

CC Mr Paul Madden, Special Adviser, Department of Health