

DHBs take charge of records

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The group has asked technology companies whether and how they could supply a health management system that would integrate patients' health information into one record that could be used by all health providers.

The system would be "person focused" rather than "collecting transactional episodes of care based on the provider" and would allow patients to access their own records.

"With appropriate privacy, security and business rules in place, people will be able to request prescription refills, make and change appointments, change address information, communicate with their physicians, obtain qualified health information and obtain information from their clinical records.

"They will also know who has accessed their record and have a measure of control over access."

Clinicians would not have to phone each other to request clinical information about a shared patient. Instead, individuals would "move through the system smoothly, easily, safely and efficiently".

The Canterbury, Nelson Marlborough, South Canterbury, MidCentral, Wairarapa, Whanganui and Northland DHBs expect to begin implementing the system in 2010 and say it could be taken up by all 21 DHBs.

Auckland, Counties Manukau and Waitemata DHBs are likely to join the initiative, according to a request for information sent to computer companies.

Chris Crooks, general manager of Capital and Coast DHB IT provider Health Intelligence, says the DHB has no immediate plans to join the initiative as its patient-administration system is only two years old.

"But we will be monitoring the developments of this initiative should any opportunities arise for Capital & Coast."

Orion Health chief executive Ian McCrae says it is "highly likely the Auckland health software company will bid for the tender.

A successful bid would be a significant milestone for the firm, which has had many high-profile contract wins overseas few at home.

Orion has about 1000 clients in more than 20 countries, and Mr McCrae has urged New Zealand to follow suit in adopting electronic health records.

The initiative has the support of the Health Ministry, which is due to take a fresh look at electronic health records this year as part of a review of its health information strategy.

Health Minister Tony Ryall said it was not National policy to introduce electronic health records but it could look at this in the future. "Ultimately, New Zealanders want an electronic health record because one of the greatest frustrations patients have is they have to tell their story umpteen times to every health professional they meet."

Auckland software firm Simpl is overseeing the first stage of the procurement process for the DHBs.