

### Welcome to the third issue of Connectivity

Welcome to the first 2007 issue of 'Connectivity' – HealthLink's e-newsletter updating Australia's health professionals on developments in e-health across the nation.

In this issue we highlight the importance of quality and the critical need for reliable communications. After all, how many of us would want to move to an electronic system if it was unreliable. We might as well stick with our fax and scanner.



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- ✓ Secure
- ✓ Efficient
- ✓ Integrated
- ✓ Safe
- ✓ Innovative
- ✓ Reliable

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#### Contact us...

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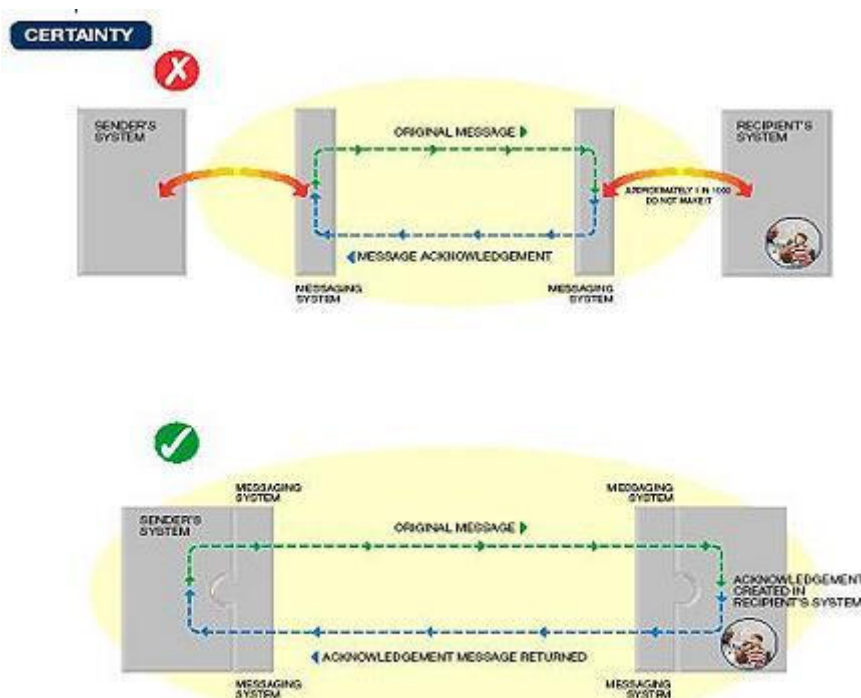
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### Why are Message Acknowledgements so important?

To provide certainty, every electronic message sent must be positively acknowledged by the intended recipient's patient management system. This is a requirement of the HL7 standards which have been adopted for use in Australia for a decade. Today, electronic messaging systems are receiving and acknowledging messages independently of the patient management system. This is a deliberate misuse of the HL7 standard. The diagram below shows both the correct and incorrect ways of handling message acknowledgements. The incorrect method (top) shows the messaging system sending an acknowledgement back to the sending system independently of the process of passing the message to the recipient's PMS. The correct method (bottom) involves the recipient system; (usually a GP Patient management System (PMS) such as 'Medical Director'), receiving the message from the messaging system and then creating a message acknowledgement in accordance with the HL7 standard and sending it back to the sender's system so that a complete delivery loop can be confirmed.



Approximately one message in every thousand is estimated to be lost via the incorrect use of the message acknowledgement process. While this seems a small percentage (0.1%) in the context of 100's of millions of messages being sent across the Australian healthcare system, in reality it constitutes a big problem. In a fully electronic environment, an average general practice receives approximately 5,000 electronic messages annually. Using an unsafe system means that they will lose approximately 5 messages per year. These messages will have been incorrectly positively acknowledged to the sender). This issue is the exact cause of the problem described in the statement below.

The clinical risk issues arising from unsafe use of electronic messaging are very real. The following statement received from an Australian medical centre in February 2007 highlights the impact of finding that an important electronic pathology test never

arrived. The test result was sent using a system that does not apply the correct message acknowledgement.

*" XYZ Medical Centre has a serious issue in that a CIN-3 pap test has gone missing (electronically) and been rediscovered as "missing" 3 months later. It has been rediscovered by a final fall back process whereby the pathology lab issues a letter if an abnormal pap has not been addressed by GP or specialist after a certain period of time.*

*Our doctor has acted correctly and we have an internal policy to ask all patients to phone for their results 1 week after the test - the patient did not do this ...*

*CIN-3 means .... you have a cancer and if not treated and checked very promptly it may become malignant and result in hysterectomy or even death*

*There will hopefully be some fur and feathers flying over this issue. We have obvious professional concerns over patient safety !"*

## HealthLink Practice Partnerships

The HealthLink Practice Partnership programme is aimed at practices that have a specific interest (and the required level of determination) to make their practice paperless. HealthLink has surveyed 2000 medical practices across Queensland and Victoria and following up on that survey, made contact with 150 practices that are 'hell-bent' upon going paperless. If you would also like to participate in this programme, please contact us at by email at [info@healthlink.net](mailto:info@healthlink.net).

Our first Practice partnership is with the King Street General Practice (KSGP) in Newcastle where Dr Craig Barnett strongly supports the use of HL7 messaging. He says:

*"If we are to make a transition to a fully paperless environment, we need to use true standards conformant HL7 messaging and ensure that all of the other parties we deal with do the same. While there is a lot of hard work and up-front effort, the rewards are there and we are just starting to see them.*

*I would urge any thinking practice that wants to break out of the faxing, scanning, paper-filing rut to band together with HealthLink and ourselves and tackle this problem head on. We are moving to a truly paperless environment first by getting our own systems working correctly and then working proactively and with HealthLink's help to encourage all of our business and clinical partners to do likewise."*

## News From Across Australia

### Royal Perth Hospital

HealthLink has been sending HL7 discharge summaries from Perth hospitals to GPs for approximately two years. Momentum is starting to mount with Kalgoorlie and Esperance Hospitals currently sending discharge summaries whilst Geraldton Hospital and their Central West Mental Health Department have recently commenced a HealthLink trial. There are approximately 400 West Australian General Practices receive electronic discharge summaries from one or more of these organisations.

### Steady Progress at Queensland Health

HealthLink has been working closely with the team at Queensland health. In addition to delivering pathology results to more than 1,000 Queensland practices for Queensland Health Pathology Services (QHPS), Queensland Health has commenced electronic discharge summaries from Ipswich Hospital, The Royal Children's Hospital and The Prince Charles Hospital. It is planned to offer this service to every hospital and every general practice in Queensland using the HealthLink messaging service.

### HealthLink in Tasmania

HealthLink commenced activity in Tasmania in May 2002. Today more than 110 practices use HealthLink on a daily basis. The Royal Hobart Hospital Pathology service and the Launceston General Hospital Pathology service use HealthLink as do some private radiology providers. HealthLink has been involved in two HealthConnect projects in Tasmania and is currently recruiting HealthLink Technical Partners in Launceston and Hobart.

## Which Software packages will send specialist reports via HealthLink?

HealthLink assists software vendors, Hospital, Laboratory, Specialist, Allied Health and GPs attempting to send or receive Australian Standards compliant HL7 messages into GPs systems. These are known as REF (Referral and discharge) messages.

As new messaging requirement standards evolve and software is upgraded, HealthLink undertakes testing of these software changes in its software test lab. HealthLink's Virtual Laboratory runs all key vendor software applications and in some cases multiple versions. Test messages are sent between different clinical systems for validation and error

**Kyle Macdonald**  
Support Manager

### Fact file...

More than 8,000 healthcare provider organisations across New Zealand and Australia use HealthLink

HealthLink systems are used to exchange more than 50 million items of clinical information annually

HealthLink is a world leader in the development of electronic referrals and discharge summary systems

HealthLink strictly enforces and supports use of health IT standards

HealthLink uses electronic signatures to correctly identify the senders or requesters of information

HealthLink's electronic communications service is used by medical practices in every State and Territory

### More HealthLink...

If there is someone who you think would be interested in receiving Connectivity, please ask them to [contact us](#) or pass on their details.

### Become A HealthLink Accredited Technician...

HealthLink offers a FREE program of accreditation to train and certify technicians. This is an opportunity for a technician or IT Contractor to become an accredited HealthLink Technical Partner through a program which includes practical training and the opportunity to have close involvement with the team at HealthLink.

We believe in training technicians to fully understand the details of our product including:

Installation  
Support  
Practice Management  
Software

checking.

Currently the following specialist software can send a specialist letter or referral from within the native application using HL7 messaging.

**Specialist software capable of Sending and Receiving Electronic Specialist Reports through HealthLink:**

Product	Company	Send	Receive	Receive an ACK	Send an ACK
Genie	Genie	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Incisive	Incisive	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Medical Director 2	HCN	No	Yes	No	Yes
Medical Director 3	HCN	No	No*	No	No*
MedTech 32	Medtech	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
MedTech Mercury	Medtech	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Practix	IBA	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Profile	Intrahealth	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
VIP	Houston	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes
Best Practice	Best Practice	Yes	Yes	Yes	Yes

\* HCN has confirmed that the ability to receive HL7 REF messages will be released in its next Medical Director 3 software (MD3.6) release which is scheduled for April.

## HealthLink Supports organisations that Promote Quality and use of Standards in Health IT



**HealthLink is a key supporter of the Australian Healthcare Messaging Laboratory (AHML). Based in Ballarat, AHML is the independent body that certifies electronic systems to ensure compliance with standards.**

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*Better Practice ~ Better Care*

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