



Using electronic requests in general practice

What are electronic requests?

Electronic requests refer to the electronic request of pathology testing, diagnostic testing or imaging. Electronic requests are generated by the practice clinical software and sent electronically by the GP to a testing vendor in the form of a secure message. Requests are sent to the chosen testing provider immediately. These requests are collectively known as “eRequests”, “eOrders” or “eReferrals”. The term “ePathology” is also used for electronic pathology test requests. This guide will use the term eRequests to generally mean all electronic testing and imaging requests.

Previously, only some testing services or the results of testing requested by eRequests were uploaded to My Health Record. Following implementation of the Health Legislation Amendment (Modernising My Health Record – Sharing by Default) Bill 2024, all pathology and diagnostic imaging results will be uploaded to My Health Record by testing services.

Why use eRequests?

eRequests improves the process efficiency of test requests by saving time on the manual processing of traditional paper requests.

Benefits for General Practice

- Speeds up processing time for eRequests
- Reduce the need for follow-ups due to missing or incorrect data
- Reduce duplication of testing.
- Orders can be automatically shared with patients and providers and tracked in real time
- Allows for commonly selected tests to be stored for easy requesting

Benefits for Patients

- Results are available in the My Health Record
- Doesn't restrict choice of testing provider
- Removes issue of lost request forms

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Example Scenario

Jordan visits the practice as they are quite unwell. The GP needs to order some tests to verify that Jordan's therapy is appropriate, and to determine other clinical causes which may warrant further therapeutic adjustment.

General Practice with eRequests and My Health Record

GP generates an eRequest:

- Electronic copy sent to nominated pathology vendor ahead of patient visit to the lab.
- SMS / email or print out version is still provided to the patient.
- Pathology vendor receives request and electronically verifies details against patients on-hand version
- Results provided electronically to practice and are available for viewing on MHR.

Potential Outcomes:

- Timely follow up appointment to discuss results.
- Test results are easily compared to the previous results on MHR supporting clinical decisions.

Patient Experience

- Timely adjustment to Jordan's therapy in response to the test results, Jordan feels much better faster

General Practice without eRequests and My Health Record

Paper request form generated

- Pathology order form is printed and handed to the patient.
- Patient visits pathology vendor and provides the order form, its details are transcribed manually by the pathology vendor.
- Results are emailed/faxed to the GP or need to be accessed via the pathology service's portal

Potential Outcomes

- Loss of order form.
- Potential delay of results follow-up
- Delayed therapeutic intervention.

Patient Experience

- Adjustment to Jordan's therapy is potentially delayed due to a longer wait for results. Jordan needs to endure being unwell for longer.

How to start using eRequests

To implement eRequests into practice there are processes a practice needs to consider:

- Capability and system compatibility
- Ensuring compliance with legislation
- Setting up and accessing the service
- Learning and integration into practice

Refer to the resources for specific guidance on each process to set up and use eRequests.

The checklists and overviews provide step by step directions.



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Resources

Acronyms	
ADHA:	Australian Digital Health Agency
CSP:	Contracted Service Provider
CIS:	Clinical information system
HI:	Health Identifier
HPOS:	Health Professional online services
MHR:	My Health Record
NASH:	National Authentication Service for Health
PKI:	Public Key infrastructure
PRODA:	Provider Digital Access

Implementation Support

Checklists & Overviews:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Overview on electronic ordering of tests Healthvital IT
Capability:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contact your diagnostic testing service providers to support with configuring their eRequest system from your practice software
Compliance:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Privacy and managing health information in general practice RACGP• Pathology laws and regulations Includes requirement for a patient choice advisory statement
Access:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Contact your IT provider to ensure your software is up to date and configured correctly.• Contact your diagnostic testing service provider to ensure that all your requesting clinicians are registered with them• Consider My Health Record (MHR) and ensure it is accessible via your practice software for viewing all results uploaded by compatible software and pathology vendors
Learning:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Reach out to your software vendors or testing services for process level support