



Using secure messaging in general practice

What is secure messaging?

Secure messaging provides a confidential and secure way for healthcare organisations to exchange clinical documents and patient information, as traditional methods like fax, email, and post are not secure. It uses encryption and authentication to ensure that messages are private and can only be accessed by authorised individuals, which is crucial for maintaining patient confidentiality. This secure exchange supports better coordination of care across different providers.

Why use secure messaging?

Secure messaging integrates efficiently into clinical workflows, provides a single channel for correspondence and enables an audit trail of successful delivery. Additionally, secure messaging provides time and cost savings through integration with clinical software, automation of tasks and postage cost savings.

Patient and clinical information sent via post, fax or email that is not encrypted may put patient privacy and confidentiality at risk.

Benefits for General Practice

- Streamline communication between providers using a single channel for referrals and messaging
- Reduced administrative burden around processing correspondence, scanning and faxing
- Reduce clerical error rates by reducing manual data collection
- Increased confidence on successful delivery of referrals with audit trails and response receipts
- Increased privacy and security vs email and paper communications

Benefits for Patients

- Patient data being appropriately and securely managed
- Efficient receipt of referrals and streamlined access to services
- Improved clinical decisions due to the right information being available at the point of care

Example Scenario of Secure Messaging in a General Practice

Jordan visits the practice, and the GP determines that Jordan requires specialist care. This is a new referral that the GP proceeds to prepare.

General practice with secure messaging	General practice without secure messaging
<p>GP can generate a referral for the patient:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Created by the software• GP can tailor the referral letter• Sends referral immediately to the specialist via the secure messaging vendor• GP receives confirmation it was received	<p>Paper referral needs to be generated:</p> <ul style="list-style-type: none">• Requirement for download and print• Email's the referral and hands a copy to the patient• Follow up is required to confirm receipt

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General practice with secure messaging

Potential Outcomes:

- The patient's referral is streamlined
- The risks and burdens associated with non-electronic referrals are eliminated

Patient Experience:

- Jordan's transfer of care to the specialist has been easier and they can look forward to arranging their appointment promptly

General practice without secure messaging

Potential Outcomes:

- Risk of referral email going to junk email folder, wrong recipient or being rejected by the system
- Patient needs to follow up with the specialist
- Delayed receipt of referral, practice requested to resend, or patient asked to send the referral

Patient Experience:

- Jordan has been stressed to get their referral to the specialist quickly and this has potentially delayed their specialist appointment and care

How to start using secure messaging

To implement secure messaging 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 secure messaging

The checklists and overviews provide step by step directions.

Resources

Acronyms

ADHA:	Australian Digital Health Agency
AHPA:	Allied Health Professionals Association
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:

- [Secure Messaging Summary | ADHA](#)
- [Implementation guide and checklist | ADHA](#)
Step-by-step guide that includes choosing a secure messaging provider, registering with the Health Identifiers Service and implementing secure messaging in your practice
- [Fact Sheet & User guide | ADHA](#)
Sending and receiving secure messages

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Digital Health Toolkit

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Implementation Support

Capability:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Secure messaging conformance register ADHA
Compliance:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Secure messaging policy template RACGP• RACGP Standards Criterion c6.3 C RACGP
Access:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Set-up: HI's PRODA HPOS NASH PKI Ensure your practice and practitioners are linked to your organisation in HPOS and the practice has a NASH security certificate installed on the CIS.• Configuration & considerations healthvital IT Vendors Messaging Templates Clinical software examples• Connection guide for secure messaging AHPA The last page of this guide easily compares vendors• Referral form templates WA Central Referral Service
Learning:	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Frequently asked questions ADHA Troubleshooting Setting up <p>Contact your secure messaging vendor(s) for process support.</p>

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