



National Prescribing Service Limited

MEDIA RELEASE

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Study identifies key prescribing software features that impact patient safety

A study by the National Prescribing Service (NPS) into how electronic software can impact prescribing practice has identified a list of key features that contribute to safe medicines use and patient safety.

Published in the online journal, [BMC Medical Informatics & Decision Making](#), the study discusses the importance of appropriate features in electronic prescribing software and offers a list of key features to guide vendors.

“Most GPs in Australia use electronic prescribing software however there are no standards or guidelines for features of these systems. This makes it difficult for vendors to know what should be included and can have a big impact on the safe and effective use of medicines,” NPS CEO Dr Lynn Weekes said.

This study builds on past research conducted by NPS into decision support alerts and contributes a valuable body of knowledge to the e-health sector.

“If implemented across all software programs, the key features identified in the study are likely to increase patient safety and improve prescribing practice. In the absence of national standards we believe this list could be used as a basis for software standards and guidance for software vendors,” Dr Weekes said.

The study was done with input from NEHTA, the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care (ACSQHC), the Medical Software Industry Association (MSIA), RACGP, software vendors and a number of prescribers, health informaticians and consumers.

To determine the most important features, a review panel rated 114 different software features by expected impact across four domains - patient safety, quality of care, usefulness to the clinician and usefulness to the patient. While all 114 features were rated as having a positive impact on at least one domain, 27 features were found to have a high impact on three or all domains.

“The key features identified range from warnings when a medicine is prescribed and the patient has a contraindication to that medicine, to clearer designs, and automatic medicines lists that can be printed for each patient with clear instructions and dose information,” Dr Weekes said.

“Most of these functions seem simple but when you consider the potential impact they can have they become very important.”

The second stage of this study, which includes an analysis of the features of individual software systems used in Australia, will be published later this year.

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The National Prescribing Service Limited (NPS) is an independent, not-for-profit organisation for quality use of medicines funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing.

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