Study shows half of all GP2GP transfers fail

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A new study shows the level of GP dissatisfaction with the GP2GP practice management system

"I think it shows the scale of the problem we have here, and it's a significant issue for front-line general practices and, as a result, there are concerns around patient safety"

A new survey by General Practice NZ and Te Whatu Ora reveals that up to 50 per cent of patient record transfers via the GP2GP system fail, with at least half of respondents citing inadequate support for the system as a significant issue.

GPNZ and Te Whatu Ora announced last month that they were joining forces to conduct a survey of practice managers to seek feedback on the ailing GP2GP system.

In March, GPNZ chair and Wellington-based specialist GP Bryan Betty said the system was past its use-by date and called for Te Whatu Ora and the Ministry of Health to take responsibility for the problems practices faced daily.

GP2GP allows for the transfer of patient records between practices and the bulk transfer of records if a clinic changes its practice management system. It is used to move hundreds of thousands of files annually, but GPs have been reporting issues using it and are calling for change.

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Dr Betty says the survey results show the difficulties with GP2GP are more extensive than anyone expected.

"I think it shows the scale of the problem we have here, and it's a significant issue for front-line general practices, and as a result, there are concerns around patient safety."

But he says it is up to Te Whatu Ora to take the next step.

"It's under Te Whatu Ora's remit at the moment. But Te Whatu Ora needs to work with the sector to resolve this promptly."

Dr Betty says GPNZ plans to meet with the health agency to discuss the findings. "But it's up to Te Whatu Ora to make this a priority."

Lack of support highlighted

GPNZ's *Pānui* newsletter, released on 6 June, includes the survey results and states: "There is limited support available for GP2GP, with about half of all respondents indicating it is a problem area. Practices want greater support to transfer large files, manage duplicate records, understand error messages, and data mapping."

Sixty-five per cent of respondents thought a GP2GP support desk would be helpful, while 39 per cent had not seen the system's user guides, which are now available on the Te Whatu Ora website.

Change needed

According to the newsletter, because of the study, new ways to allow practices to manage the transfer of larger documents via the GP2GP system and data standards to make it easier to transfer files will need to be investigated. Further work is also required to understand the system's errors and what to do when they occur.

"We're engaging with PMS suppliers to understand what opportunities exist to resolve the challenges for practices. This involves reviewing a range of technical agreements and a range of different processes that are in place to allow GP2GP to work the way it does for each PMS application."

But change will not come easy. "It is clear any technical changes made to the GP2GP service will be complex to work through."

Lack of support and maintenance

Karl Cole is a specialist GP at Auckland's Papatoetoe Family Doctors, a member of the RNZCGP board and has a keen interest in health IT and technology. Dr Cole says the survey findings are not surprising, but the fact there was even a need to conduct it illustrates that Te Whatu Ora has little understanding of what is happening in primary healthcare. He says GP2GP is just one of many legacy IT systems in the system that have been neglected and need maintenance.

Health IT company Patients First, was owned by GPNZ (the RNZCGP is a former shareholder) and developed GP2GP. But the Ministry of Health ended Patients First's contract in 2021. To ensure some of the services continued, the ministry's IT division agreed to administer GP2GP before it was transferred to Te Whatu Ora as part of the health reforms.

In a statement, Te Whatu Ora data and digital director of sector digital channels Michael Dreyer says the survey was to validate anecdotal information about the performance of GP2GP and provide it with qualitative data.

"Health NZ is already engaging with GPNZ, and will continue to do so, including further discussion, and analysis of the survey information. We are continuing to review the situation with GP2GP and carry out ongoing work to identify potential solutions."

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