Leveraging eHRSS to Improve the Health of the Community

"In the long run, the Electronic Health Record Sharing System (eHRSS) should be more than a platform for medical records sharing. As its name suggests, the scope of eHRSS could cover 'health' records in addition to 'disease' records. With increasing participation and data volume, we can leverage the breadth and depth of the data in the system to support the formulation of healthcare policies and initiatives to facilitate disease prevention and health promotion," said Dr Kwong.

Dr Heston Kwong, JP
Head, Emergency Response and Information Branch
Centre for Health Protection, Department of Health

Dr Kwong, a member of the Steering Committee (SC) on Electronic Health Record (eHR) Sharing and Working Group (WG) on eHR Partnership, saw huge potential in eHRSS. He said the system can bring great benefits to the community when the information contained becomes more comprehensive and representative as more healthcare providers (HCPs) and patients join.

He said the Department of Health (DH), being the Government's health adviser and agency for executing health policies and statutory functions, looks forward to leveraging the wealth of data in eHRSS, both clinical and social, for analysis.

"Our work is not just about treating patients. We also help safeguard the health of the public through disease prevention and health promotion," he explained.

"By social information, we mean family history, dietary habit or lifestyle such as exercise pattern, smoking and drinking behaviour, etc," said Dr Kwong.

"For example, we can analyse the social information to identify the risk factors of certain diseases or the health needs of different age groups," he said, adding that the information can potentially be collected from data contributed by patients to the future Patient Portal, a major initiative of Stage Two eHRSS Development.

Dr Kwong saw huge potential in eHRSS and the benefits to the community

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DH looks forward to leveraging the wealth of data in eHRSS, both clinical and social, for analysis

"We can also educate the public through the Patient Portal by disseminating targeted health information according to their needs based on individual health conditions and profiles."

Utilisation of eHRSS across DH Services

"At present, eHRSS is used by all 14 clinical services of DH to varying degrees, covering some 170 service units," Dr Kwong stated.

Six of them, namely, Antenatal Service, Families Clinics, Dental Service, Clinical Genetic Service, Social Hygiene Service and Special Preventive Programme, involving about 70 clinic locations, are already capable of two-way communication with eHRSS via the department's Clinical Information Management System (CIMS).

As a major provider of childhood immunisation in Hong Kong, DH is also contributing massive immunisation records to eHRSS, mainly from its 30 Maternal and Child Health Centres, 15 centres under Student Health Service and the School Immunisation Teams. For the remaining service units, eHRSS is being utilised by their healthcare professionals (HCProfs) for accessing eHRs of participating patients to support the delivery of day-to-day healthcare services.

"With the target completion of phase two enhancement of our CIMS in about six years' time, we are confident that all service units can achieve two-way sharing with eHRSS," Dr Kwong remarked.

Dual-role in eHR Programme

Elaborating on DH's involvement in eHRSS, Dr Kwong said DH has a dual role here, as a supporter and as a participant.

DH has a dual role in eHR Programme

"We have been actively supporting the planning, development and implementation of eHRSS, being involved in different levels of the governance structure. In addition to SC and WGs, we are also participating in the Coordinating Group on eHR Content & Information Standards and various Domain Groups. Our Drug Office also provides support to the drawing up and on-going maintenance of the Hong Kong Medical Terminology Table which is now used by eHRSS," he said.

"As the secretariat of healthcare professional boards and councils, DH has assisted in setting up the Common Professional List for professional status verification for eHRSS participating HCProfs. eHR Registration Centres have also been set up at around 20 DH clinics to facilitate patient registration," Dr Kwong added.

On the other hand, as a major public HCP, DH has joined eHRSS right from the beginning. It is now sharing medical records of some 100 000 healthcare recipients (HCRs). So far more than 1.4 million records, ranging from laboratory results, allergy, adverse drug reactions to diagnosis, etc. have been uploaded to the system. eHR access by DH's HCProfs has accumulated to about 37 000 times.

IT Enhancement in Synergy with eHRSS

According to Dr Kwong, eHRSS has also catalysed the information technology (IT) development of DH. "We have built our CIMS to tie in with the development of eHRSS and devoted a lot of efforts to enhance our CIMS in order to share data."

DH has recently obtained funding support from the Legislative Council for taking forward its departmental IT enhancement project. A key objective of the project is to transform DH into a data-driven organisation through infrastructure upgrade, business process enhancement and building up capability in data analytics. To this end, CIMS will be enhanced into an integrated system for storing eHRs of patients in DH and fully interfaced with eHRSS.

CIMS will be fully compatible with eHRSS and can accommodate initiatives of future eHRSS development such as capturing and sharing radiological images

Dr Kwong highlighted, "by then our CIMS will be fully compatible with eHRSS and can accommodate initiatives of future eHRSS development such as capturing and sharing radiological images."

Dr Kwong believed that participation by both HCRs and HCPs is the key success factor of future eHRSS development

Challenges in Future eHRSS Development

Turning to eHRSS' coming development, Dr Kwong believed that participation by both HCRs and HCPs is the key success factor.

"With increasing participation, more comprehensive and representative information will be available in the system," he said, stressing the need to drive further participation by private HCPs in particular.

Another challenge is about data security, he remarked, "the Patient Portal can be a motivating factor for HCRs to join eHRSS, but they need to be assured of data privacy."

As Dr Kwong concluded, "Since the launch of eHRSS two years ago, we see more and more service recipients of DH joining the system. And the more our HCProfs get acquainted with the use of eHRSS, the more they appreciate the values of eHR sharing. Coupled with the enhancement of CIMS and eHRSS' upcoming development, I believe that greater synergy can be achieved and the benefits of eHR sharing can be fully realised in the long run."

Integrating and Advancing Community Healthcare through eHRSS

St James' Settlement (SJS) has a long history of providing community care and support services in Hong Kong. When it comes to enhancing nursing and healthcare services to those in need, SJS considers that the Electronic Health Record Sharing System (eHRSS) has a lot to offer.

Ms Yvonne Lo & Ms Jenny Choi
Senior Managers, Continuing Care, St James' Settlement

Community healthcare service is among the broad spectrum of services currently provided by SJS, a charitable non-governmental organisation in Hong Kong with a history of close to 70 years.

From SJS' experience, Ms Lo and Ms Choi recognised the importance of electronic health records (eHRs) to the provision of healthcare services.

As a long-time participant of the Hospital Authority (HA)'s Public-Private Interface – Electronic Patient Record Pilot Project, SJS joined eHRSS shortly after its launch in 2016. Currently 15 of its healthcare service units are using eHRSS. Four of them are rehabilitation services units serving people with disabilities, while the others are related to continuing care for the elderly in which Ms Lo and Ms Choi are directly involved.

SJS has been providing community care and support services in Hong Kong for close to 70 years

Ms Lo and Ms Choi explained these are the units that require the collaborative efforts of different healthcare professionals (HCProfs), such as nurses, occupational therapists and physiotherapists, in delivering services to their users.

"Right now access to eHRSS is available mainly to our nurses. We hope that more of our HCProfs can access the system soon, such as physiotherapists and occupational therapists," said Ms Choi, referring to the Government's plan to enable eHRSS access for more HCProf groups in the community at later stage.

"Our three philanthropic community pharmacies are all prepared to join the list of service units using the system,' echoed Ms Lo.

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Accurate Information for Person-Centred Care

Both Ms Lo and Ms Choi agreed that as different service units get more familiar with using eHRSS, the system has been making an increasingly prominent impact on SJS' services. At the same time, response from colleagues has been positive.

eHRSS has been making an increasingly prominent impact on SJS' services in providing person-centred care

"In the past, medical histories and information of our elderly users, such as treatment received, examinations conducted, medication records and booked appointments, largely came from the users themselves or their family members, but it's all up to how much they could remember and understand," said Ms Lo.

"Through eHRSS, we can now obtain this information from HA and other participating healthcare providers (HCPs), facilitating us to work out better care plan to meet individual needs," added Ms Lo.

"Information about medications, for instance, is important, as we have to ensure our elders take their medicine correctly, and to adjust the healthcare and support services for them accordingly in case of any change."

Comprehensive Information for Integrated Care

As delivery of integrated care is central to its continuing care strategy, SJS emphasises inter-disciplinary knowledge under a multi-disciplinary working model in providing services. In home care, for example, the teams comprise HCProfs of different disciplines.

"We provide a full range of support services such as nursing care, personal care, home safety improvement and in-home rehabilitation," Ms Choi explained. "Health records of service users can be obtained from the one-stop platform of eHRSS for our teams to formulate comprehensive care plans."

"Nurses aside, we have occupational therapists taking care of home modifications or cognitive training for elders, as well as physiotherapists helping them in post-injury rehabilitation or to improve their physical activity. eHRs such as diagnostic findings will certainly enhance the delivery of continuous healthcare in the community and facilitate medical-social collaboration."

SJS could leverage eHRSS to further improve its services with two-way communication between public and private HCPs

Further eHRSS Adoption

With two-way communication between public and private HCPs made possible through eHRSS, Ms Choi believes that in future, SJS could leverage the system to further enhance its services.

"In the longer run, we may contribute by sharing information such as referral advice and health-related reference notes if technically feasible," said Ms Choi.

Ms Lo supplemented, "For instance, if we observe that some elders may have emotional problems such as depression, our nurses can document and upload their observations to eHRSS for doctors' reference. Another area of possible contribution is related to services for children with special education needs, in which our occupational therapists could give their professional advice through eHRSS for reference."

Ms Choi and Ms Lo said SJS also supports the sharing of radiological images and setting up of a Patient Portal under Stage Two Development of eHRSS.

Ms Choi said, "at this moment, there are only written reports of radiological examinations. It will help if our physiotherapists can view the relevant imaging records to get a clearer picture of patients' conditions when drawing up post-discharge treatment plans."

Ms Lo said that having a portal for patients to access their own records, and input basic and simple health vitals can promote self-care. "Many elders nowadays are smart and can master mobile devices and applications easily. Still, it is important for the portal or application to be user-friendly."

Last but not least, Ms Lo highlighted the importance of data security and privacy protection. "Now it is working quite well as patients will receive notifications when their records have been accessed. Yet with more and more records shared via eHRSS, protection of personal data privacy, information confidentiality and system security should be strengthened continuously."

Stakeholders' Views on Patient Portal - Healthcare Sector

Efforts continued to collect views from stakeholders on the development of a Patient Portal under Stage Two Development of the Electronic Health Record Sharing System. This issue highlights views and suggestions of representatives from the public and private healthcare sectors.

Further to the engagement activities organised for patient groups in February 2018, meetings were held with healthcare representatives from the public and private sectors, as well as non-governmental organisations (NGOs) in March 2018 at the Central Government Offices as part of a consultancy study to find out stakeholders' needs, expectations and concerns regarding the development of a Patient Portal.

Discussions were focused on three key aspects of the Portal, including access to electronic health records (eHRs) and health information by users, value-added functions and data sharing restriction features.

Access to eHRs and Health Information

From healthcare professionals' perspective, there are genuine needs and benefits for patients to access their health information so as to better manage their health. As many representatives pointed out, "In fact, some of the health information, such as medications and appointments are already accessible and kept by patients using their own ways. There is no question that allowing them more convenient access to such information via the Patient Portal will facilitate their self-management. This will also help us much in taking care of our patients as it is not uncommon for them to forget important information like allergies."

Secure access to eHRs and health information via the Patient Portal

Representatives considered that data which is important to patients' health and safety and more easily understood by most, such as medications, allergies and adverse drug reactions, should be made available first. Information that is of high value to a sizable user group, such as childhood immunisation records, may also be included. For records that are more complicated or require professional interpretation or analysis, such as laboratory results and diagnosis, they were not suggested by most. "There is always the possibility that a patient who does not know how to interpret the data may become unnecessarily distressed and pessimistic," a representative remarked.

In addition to viewing patient's own records, representatives saw the potential of the Patient Portal serving as an integrated platform for accessing general health information which is now only available at multiple and scattered locations. It was also considered useful and effective if the Portal can further deliver targeted information and health promotion materials, e.g. vaccination and screening programmes, based on user profiles. Nonetheless, representatives reminded that caution needs to be taken against potential information overload to users.

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Value-added Functions

In exploring the potential functions of the Patient Portal, it was agreed that priority should be given to those that can most engage and empower patients, or facilitate carers in managing patients' health.

"Functions like medication schedules and appointment reminders are helpful, particularly for the elderly patients," said an NGO representative. This was concurred by public sector representatives, "if patients can better adhere to their medication or treatment plans, the chances of unplanned admissions will likely be reduced. This also facilitates better utilisation of our limited public healthcare resources."

Representatives further suggested including functions for patients to input their health vitals, such as blood pressure readings, and other social information like smoking or drinking habits, to promote self-care and primary care at the community level. While patients' expectation needs to be well managed that such information will not be monitored in real time, value-added features such as health tips and system-generated alerts based on the inputted data may be provided.

As highlighted by most representatives, the design and functions of the Portal should centre on the needs of the target users. It should also be simple, easy and convenient to use.

Data Sharing Restriction

Regarding the introduction of additional control on data sharing, representatives acknowledged the privacy concerns and needs of some patients yet emphasised their concerns on patient safety. Some expressed that restricting healthcare professionals' access to certain clinical information may impede the drawing up of treatment plans most suitable for patients. Medico-liability is another issue that needs to be addressed.

Some representatives were more worried that patients themselves are not fully aware of the potential consequences of withholding their records. "The risks and implications need to be clearly spelt out if patients are given the choice to restrict data access. In any case, as a duty of professional care, we will enquire as much information as possible from our patients when taking care of them," a representative stressed.

Patient Portal: Improving Efficiency and Healthcare Quality

By and large, healthcare representatives were supportive to the development of the Patient Portal. As a representative of a healthcare professional body remarked, "the values of eHR sharing and the Patient Portal lie in promoting communication and collaboration between healthcare practitioners and patients in co-managing health, which in turn improves the efficiency and quality of healthcare services for patients. Local healthcare professionals and patients should be encouraged to take part and make the most of it."

Attended organisations on 8 and 13 March 2018 include the following:
Hong Kong Private Hospitals Association, Quality Healthcare, Hong Kong Society of Medical Informatics, Tung Wah Group of Hospitals, Senior Citizen Home Safety Association and Po Leung Kuk

eHRSS in the International Digital Health Arena

The Electronic Health Record Sharing System (eHRSS) has a growing presence in the global information and communication technology (ICT) sector. It has recently won another international award and was presented to global health leaders in an international digital health summit.

The World Information Technology and Services Alliance (WITSA) Global ICT Excellence Awards 2018

eHRSS has once again acquired international recognition in the global ICT sector, winning the Innovative eHealth Solutions Award of the WITSA Global ICT Excellence Awards 2018 for its outstanding achievement in adopting ICT to promote healthcare for the benefits of the community, the government and the private sector.

Ms Ida Lee, former Commissioner for the Electronic Health Record and Mr Hudson Chan, Senior Systems Manager (Electronic Health Systems Development) of the Hospital Authority (HA), received the award in Hyderabad, India, on 19 February 2018.

Speaking at a press conference announcing the award winners, Ms Lee said eHRSS was a key component of Hong Kong's healthcare system, providing the necessary information technology infrastructure for facilitating two-way sharing of patient's health records among public and private healthcare providers in Hong Kong.

"Other than the technical side, eHRSS has been developed with a human touch. Since the very beginning, we have worked closely with our stakeholders and considered their clinical and workflow needs with a view to developing a practical, user-friendly and sustainable system. We are glad that with the concerted efforts from patients, healthcare professionals and ICT practitioners, eHRSS has once again acquired international recognition," remarked Ms Lee.

eHRSS has once again acquired international recognition

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Other ICT Awards Won by eHRSS Since Launch:

- **Hong Kong ICT Awards 2017**
  - Best Business Solution (Application) Gold Award

- **Asia Pacific ICT Alliance Awards 2017**
  - Government and Public Sector Category Winner Award

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The Global Digital Health Partnership (GDHP) Summit and International Digital Health Symposium

The international event was held in Canberra and Sydney, Australia, from 19 to 23 February 2018. GDHP is an international collaboration between governments, public agencies and multinational organisations to support the effective implementation of digital health services.

This year, Hong Kong was invited to join health leaders from 13 countries and the World Health Organization at the GDHP inaugural summit. Dr NT Cheung, Head of Information Technology and Health Informatics of HA, gave a presentation to participants of the summit on the development path and vision of eHealth in Hong Kong's public sector, in which eHRSS has played a significant part. The achievements, challenges, key success factors and further potential of eHealth development in Hong Kong were also shared.

Following the summit, representatives of the Electronic Health Record Office and HA joined the symposium and visited several renowned health services bodies and academic institutions. Fruitful discussions and exchanges were held with delegates from other countries on how to make best use of digital technology, including electronic health record sharing, to deliver digital health services to support clinical quality and safety, as well as how healthcare policy issues and challenges were tackled by other governments. The event had provided invaluable insights for the further development of eHRSS in Hong Kong.

Dr NT Cheung, Head of Information Technology and Health Informatics of HA, gave a presentation on eHealth to participants of the summit

Representatives of the Electronic Health Record Office and HA joined the symposium and visited several renowned health services bodies and academic institutions

Further Publicity for eHRSS and New eHR Viewer Data Sharing Feature

The second series of promotional materials on the Electronic Health Record Sharing System (eHRSS) is ready for release as part of the publicity drive recently launched for the system. Meanwhile, a new feature will soon be introduced to the eHR Viewer to facilitate the sharing of essential health information to eHRSS.

The latest series of promotional materials, prepared by the Electronic Health Record Office (eHR Office), aims to enhance the public's understanding on eHRSS and to promote streamlined measures on patient registration.

Printed Collaterals

Newly designed items have been produced to facilitate the public to easily grasp the fundamentals of eHRSS, streamlined registration procedures and new features related to patient registration. These items are:

Booklet -
A new guide for healthcare recipient registration will be released shortly for the public's handy reference. Contents cover basic concepts and benefits of eHRSS, scope of sharable data, registration methods for different user groups and other relevant information, such as means for making data access requests.

Leaflets -
Two sets of leaflets promoting the streamlined patient registration methods and sharing consent management using the Access Key are produced for distribution to the public through eHR Registration Centres and various healthcare locations.

Poster -
A poster highlighting important notes for substitute decision makers (SDMs) when they handle registration matters for patients has been produced for SDM's information at eHR Registration Centres.

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Promotional Videos

A new set of videos will soon be released at the eHRSS website. Topics include-
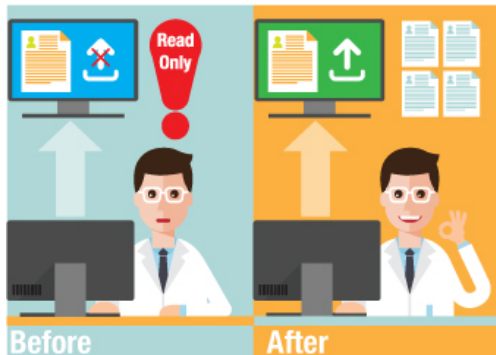
- Patient registration by SDMs
- Patient registration by Authorised Persons
- Guide for healthcare providers (HCPs) on patient registration
- Benefits of eHRSS in Public-Private Partnership programmes
- The vision of Stage Two eHRSS Development

Please visit https://www.ehealth.gov.hk/en/publicity_promotion/ehr_ video.html for viewing the uploaded and upcoming videos.

New Data Sharing Feature on eHR Viewer

Drug allergic reactions may be effectively avoided by checking patients' drug allergy and adverse drug reaction (ADR) records. In view of the paramount importance of allergy and ADR records to clinical care and patient safety, an input module in the eHR Viewer for adding and editing such records is being developed and targeted to be launched in the last quarter of 2018. This new feature will enable HCPs of eHRSS, especially doctors in solo practice who are not equipped with local electronic medical record systems for data upload to eHRSS, to share their patients' relevant records to the system via the eHR Viewer for reference by other healthcare professionals.

More details will be featured in the next issue of eHealth News.

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eHRSS Updates

The Electronic Health Record Office (eHR Office) continued to organise and participate in activities to promote the Electronic Health Record Sharing System (eHRSS) and to engage stakeholders.

Hong Kong Pharmacy Conference 2018

The conference was held at the Hong Kong Convention and Exhibition Centre on 10-11 March 2018. Themed "30th Pearl Anniversary: Pharma-Collaboration for New Frontiers", the conference was co-hosted by 7 organisations comprising professional bodies, academic institutions and public organisations to foster collaboration and service innovation among pharmacists and other healthcare professionals to improve continuity of care and health outcomes for patients.

Ms Ida Lee, former Commissioner for the Electronic Health Record (eHRC), was invited as the guest speaker at the session titled "eHRSS for the Pharmacy Profession" under the Partnership stream of the Conference. Participants were introduced to eHRSS and given details on how the pharmacy profession can take part in and benefit from eHR sharing. Ms Lee also elaborated on what potential opportunities eHRSS' coming development would present to the profession. The session was attended by close to 200 participants.

Ms Ida Lee, former eHRC, was invited as the guest speaker at the session titled "eHRSS for the Pharmacy Profession" under the Partnership stream of the Conference

Hong Kong eHealth Consortium Annual Dinner 2018

Representatives of the eHR Office attended the event, organised by the Hong Kong eHealth Consortium, on 13 March 2018 at the YMCA Hong Kong. Other participants included other government officials, professionals from the information and communication technology (ICT) industries and representatives of the healthcare sector from Mainland China and Hong Kong.

Taking this opportunity, representatives of the eHR Office had insightful exchange with participants on the development and advancement of eHealth, and the use of ICT for continuous enhancement of healthcare services in Hong Kong.

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RTHK Live Programme on eHRSS

Mr Ian Chin, Acting eHRC, and Dr W N Wong, Chief Manager (eHR) of the Hospital Authority (HA), attended the live programme "Healthpedia" on Radio 1 and TV 31 of the Radio Television Hong Kong (RTHK) on 23 March 2018 to give audience an update on the latest situation of eHRSS and the Stage Two Development. They also addressed some common questions about the operations of eHRSS, registration procedures and introduced new enhancement measures to facilitate the public to join.

eHRSS featured in RTHK live programme

The programme (in Cantonese) is now available online:
RTHK Radio – http://www.rthk.hk/radio/radio1/programme/healthpedia/episode/494182
RTHK TV – http://www.rthk.hk/tv/dtt31/programme/healthpedia_tv/episode/480022

Dr CP Ho, MH, JP, Vice-President of HKMA (left), and Dr CP Wong, JP, Chairman of HK Society of Medical Informatics (right), shared with participants their experience in using CMS NW

HKMA CMS NW Updates and Preview Session

The Hong Kong Medical Association (HKMA) held a preview session on 26 April 2018 to introduce its Clinical Management System (CMS) Nu Wa (NW), a system developed for private doctors' adoption under the eHR Partnership Project.

The CMS NW has built-in connectivity with eHRSS and enhanced features such as document management functions. It can also integrate with the HA's General Outpatient Clinic Public-Private Partnership Programme module so as to streamline the workflow and operation for participating doctors.

More than 30 healthcare professionals attended the session. Mr Ian Chin, Principal Assistant Secretary for Food and Health (Health) 6, as well as representatives of eHR Office and HA, were invited to join the event.

Patient Forum

HA organises forums for patient groups on a regular basis to update them on initiatives and development of HA's healthcare services, as well as to collect their views. The forum on 17 May 2018 was attended by over 40 participants from 28 patient groups, who were briefed by representatives of the eHR Office on the latest progress and upcoming development of the eHR programme.

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Fun Quiz - Chance to Win a Prize

Find the Missing Pieces

Come join the fun by testing your knowledge about eHRSS! Find the correct piece that went missing from each of the pictures below. Circle your answers and send them in. Winners will receive a prize (while stock lasts). Answers can be found in this issue of eHealth News.
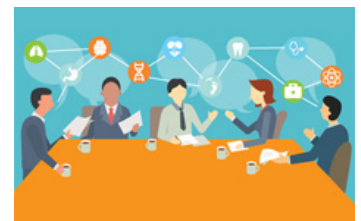

DH's CIMS Enhancement In Synergy with eHRSS

A B C D

Secure Access to eHRs via the Patient Portal

A B C D

New eHRSS Poster for SDM's Information

A B C D

Potential Social Information to be Contributed to eHRSS

A B C D

Join the Quiz

To join the quiz, please print out this page, mark your answers and fill out the required information. Completed entries should be returned by fax at 2300 7921 or email to enquiry@ehealth.gov.hk on or before 10 August 2018.

Name :	
Tel. no. :	Email :
Address :	

After the closing date on 10 August 2018, you can check the correct answers in the newsletter posted at the eHRSS website. Personal particulars and contact information collected in this fun quiz will only be used to notify winners and send prizes. All personal data collected in this fun quiz will not be disclosed to any third parties and will be deleted by the Electronic Health Record Office two weeks after all prizes have been sent.

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