



**IRISH MEDICAL
ORGANISATION**
Ceardchumann Dochtúirí na hÉireann

IMO Submission to the Oireachtas Joint Committee on Health

**Progress in the delivery of the national framework for the full
digitisation of Irish healthcare records and information systems.**

December 2025

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Since the early 2000's the IMO has been calling for investment in Information Technology and systems across the health service including investment in a national system of Electronic Health Records and IT infrastructure across health services in acute and community care.

The benefits of Electronic Health Records are well known including: enhanced patient safety and quality of care; reduced repetition and errors in diagnostics and treatments; administrative efficiencies and the smooth transfer of patients and their information between settings. The collection of data also allows for the advance of medical knowledge, management of disease and health service planning.

In 2025, however Ireland remains a significant outlier lagging behind other countries in Europe and the OECD in terms of investment in eHealth with the majority of hospitals and HSE community based services in Ireland still using paper-based systems as the main patient record as well as paper-based systems for tracking patient referrals, outpatient appointments etc with significant risk to patient safety including delays in locating and accessing files, incomplete or erroneous files, as well as difficulties in retrieving the relevant information within a file.

There has been some progress in recent years in terms of the rollout of eHealth initiatives including:

- **Healthmail** – a secure electronic communication system for exchanging patient information between clinicians
- **Healthlink** has been rolled out and provides a web-based messaging service which allows the secure transmission of clinical patient information between Hospitals, Health Care Agencies and General Practitioners and support and enables the use of MedLIS and NIMIS
- **IHI**-Each patient now has an Individual Health Identifier (IHI) as provided for under the Health Identifiers Act 2014. The purpose of the IHI is to provide patient safety by identifying patients correctly and identifying their associated health records. In addition, it enables the delivery of eHealth as it provides the ability to identify multiple health records that may be associated with a patient.
- **NIMIS (National Integrated Medical Imaging System)** has been rolled out across the majority of hospitals and GP practices providing a secure platform for the sharing of radiology, cardiology and other diagnostic images.
- **MedLIS (Ireland's National Laboratory Information System)**, or electronic lab ordering has been rolled out in a number of areas and is integrated into GP Practice Management Systems.
- On **ePrescribing** the HSE are currently going through a tender process seeking a provider for this system. GPs are currently prescribing through Healthmail system which allows for prescriptions to be emailed directly to pharmacies. It is expected that the first phase of ePrescribing will be rolled out in 2028.

In terms of legislation, the Health Information Bill has gone through the final stages in the Dail providing a framework for the establishment and sharing of electronic health records in line with the EU Regulation on a European Health Data Space providing patients with greater access and control over their electronic healthcare records while promoting greater access to health data for research, innovation and policy making. At the same time standards for are being developed at National and European level to support implementation of the EUs regulation on a European Health Data Space as well as for the deployment of AI in healthcare.

On the other hand progress with the development of Electronic Health Records and investment in IT infrastructure has been slow.

Progress with a National System of Electronic Health Records.

GPs have long recognised the value of eHealth and invested significantly in their own practice management systems. Under the deal reached between the IMO and the HSE and Department of Health in 2019, GPs agreed to support the role out of a number of eHealth initiatives including the development of a national summary care record and national shared care record over a four-year period, however little progress was made during this period.

The IMO is currently working with the HSE and the Department of Health on providing a Shared Care Record for each patient. Shared Care Records use a set of data auto-populated from GP Practice Systems and also incorporate data from hospitals to provide a more complete view of the patient. The primary purpose of electronic health records is to serve as a tool to support quality and safe patient care. Usability of electronic health records is vital –salient clinical information must be easily retrievable from the electronic health record, and they must not create additional administrative workload for doctors, taking away from clinical time spent with patients. Further clarification is needed on issues in relation to patient consent, security and access to patient records for healthcare professionals, certifications in relation to who is the controller of patient information.

EHRs have been piloted in some hospitals however there are ongoing issues of interoperability, while poor and outdated infrastructure limits access to national systems particularly in community-based services outside the hospital systems such as psychiatry, or primary care services. To our knowledge, no comprehensive assessment has been made of the current IT infrastructure requirements across the HSE.

Investment in digitalisation of healthcare is a key priority National Development Plan Review 2025 Sectoral Investment Plan for Health with over €2billion allocated to support the Digitalisation for Care Strategy. The IMO would welcome a more detailed plan which lays out a timeframe for implementation, an assessment of the IT systems and infrastructure requirements across the HSE and an economic impact assessment of the cost of complying with the European Health data Space.

Summary of Recommendations

Medical Practitioners require accurate patient records to support the safe and effective delivery of care across all healthcare settings.

Electronic Health Records and other eHealth solutions must be fit for purpose in a busy clinical environment

Information for electronic health records must be auto-populated from GP practice management systems.

Electronic Health Records must be user friendly and the salient information easily retrievable from the patient record. They must not create additional administrative workload taking away from clinical time spent with patients.

Further clarification is needed on issues in relation to patient consent, security and access to patient records for healthcare professionals, certifications in relation to who is the controller of patient information.

The IMO is calling on the Department of Health and the HSE to publish a fully funded and detailed plan to implement a fully digitalised health service, with integration across primary care, secondary care and community and public health medicine and with appropriate input from all stakeholders.

The plan should include

- **A timeframe with specific detailed milestones included so as to monitor progress and any issues that may arise.**
- **An assessment the IT systems and infrastructure requirements across the HSE.**
- **A full economic impact assessment of the cost of complying with the European Health Data Space including the potential capital, administrative and opportunity cost to General Practice.**