KEY MESSAGES

The use of an electronic health record (EHR) in a maternity shared-care environment

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Policy context

For over 20 years, a maternity paper hand-held record (PHR) has been used to support the care of a woman during her pregnancy as she visits her community General Practitioner (GP) and hospital health care providers. In 2012, a maternity electronic health record (EHR) was developed as an alternative to the PHR and implemented at the Mater Mothers’ hospital (MMH) in conjunction with GPs in a shared care setting. This report describes the study which determined best quality care in the two cohorts of women and their health care providers, answering three questions: 1. Completeness of recorded specific evidence based best practice variables, 2. Experiences of women and health providers when using an EHR and a PHR for perception, satisfaction and usability, 3. Integration of care for teamwork, clinical input and process deliverables?

Findings included:

> The EHR demonstrated improved access and greater completeness of the collection of best practice maternity variables.

> Women, hospital providers and GPs were familiar with and generally ‘liked’ the PHR, although sections of redundant information were identified.

> Women, hospital providers and GPs were enthusiastic about the possibilities of using the EHR, but required orientation, education and ongoing support.

> GPs had problems of access to EHR, but security was not identified as an issue.

> EHR has not provided improved integration of maternity care, due to limited usage by women and health care providers and GPs.

Key messages

> Using the EHR to provide a more complete set of clinical best practice variables, than the PHR can record manually.

> Modification of the PHR to address issues of redundant or superfluous information.

> Continued education and support programs for health care providers in terms of understanding the functionality of the shared-care EHR and data entry requirements and recruitment process of women.

> Develop pathways to demonstrate and educate women and health care providers on shared viewing of EHR information from a woman’s perspective.

> Liaise with creators of the EHR software systems to modify the maternity EHR to enable improved access to and reliability with current GP systems.

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