

# Digital transformation of a rural health alliance delivering a unified patient record across multiple agencies

/Case Study



*The Grampians Rural Health Alliance (GRHA) is one of five Victorian rural health alliances that are responsible for the delivery of core Information and Communications Technology (ICT) services, strategic planning and development. GRHA membership comprises 11 hospital-based health services, four bush nursing centres and one stand-alone community centre spread across 40 sites.*

GRHA provides shared technologies, including internet access, data connectivity, shared applications, IP telephony, mobile and desktop solutions. It also works to streamline workflow and continuity of care across the region's multiple providers and sites. All efforts are aligned with the Victoria State Government Digital Health Strategy aims to transition from an episodic-centered health system to a patient-centered system.

## Integrating clinical information for more patient-centered care

In partnership with its lead agency, Ballarat Health Service, GRHA expanded its existing clinical information system across the region to support innovative models of patient-centered care. Disparate systems limiting access to patient data between wards, emergency departments, community care and residential services had been identified as a critical issue in the delivery of a continuum of care.

### Client Profile

Grampians Rural  
Health Alliance (GRHA)

Victoria, Australia

### OVERVIEW

- Provides shared technology applications to member healthcare agencies
- Comprises across 40 sites:
  - 11 hospital-based health services
  - 4 bush nursing centres
  - 1 stand-alone community health centre

### ALLSCRIPTS SOLUTIONS

- Allscripts Opal



#### Collaborated to improve access to data

A common agreement across health services helps make scanned documents available in clinical records within 24 hours



#### Achieved digital transformation

New system implemented across a rural region including 40 hospitals and 11 health services



#### Consistent discharge summaries

All agencies now have a robust electronic mechanism to record and share discharge summaries, these are being rolled out in the coming months



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*"Our team worked with Allscripts to establish a governance and change mechanism to define, review and implement end-user requests...This meant that the end users drove changes and could tailor the solution to fit their needs."*

Kate Nolan  
Chief Information Officer  
Ballarat Health Services,  
Grampians Rural Health Alliance

*"This project is unique in that the implementation was across a large geographic region comprising 40 disparate facilities within 11 separate agencies working collaboratively to implement a single shared solution with agreed scope and ongoing governance."*

Cyprian Hague  
Application Portfolio Manager  
Ballarat Health Services,  
Grampians Rural Health Alliance

Allscripts Opal had been in place at Ballarat Health Services (BHS) since 2009. GRHA aimed to provide the same unified view of the patient's medical record across the entire region, encompassing 11 separate area health services.

"The Regional Electronic Medical Records Project enables clinical staff to access full patient medical record data and move towards paperless documentation," Chief Information Officer Kate Nolan said. "The availability of current, timely and accurate information, together with adequate communication between medical practitioners and health services, helps ensure the best care for patients."

## Collaboration delivers unified system for multiagency use

A key challenge of this initiative was to create a shared technical platform that effectively supports multiagency use of a single database and a unified, shared patient record. The first step was a complete infrastructure upgrade, including database, storage and web server updates. Next, due to the shared infrastructure GRHA collaborated with the agencies to reach a region-wide agreement on several issues, including naming conventions, eForm templates and a patient data privacy policy.

"Collaboration between separate agencies and the effort this activity required is not to be underestimated," Nolan said. "A robust project governance structure enabled a mechanism to agree on shared policies and protocols."

For example, all area health services committed to and are maintaining a quick scanning Service Level Agreement to hasten the number of scanned clinical documents added to the combined clinical record within 24 hours. In another example, the agencies reached an agreement on a discharge summary template that has been re-engineered to comply with the latest National Guidelines for on-screen presentation and discharge summaries from the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care.

"A positive result of the implementation of the Allscripts Opal solution has meant that all agencies will have a robust electronic mechanism to record and deliver discharge summaries, which can now be shared electronically with GPs and My Health Record," Application Portfolio Manager Cyprian Hague said.

## Meeting end-user needs

GRHA engaged its clinicians to guide the project and align decisions with the needs and requirements of the end users. "The project team worked with Allscripts to establish a governance and change mechanism to define, review and implement end-user requests," Nolan said. "This meant that the end users drove changes and could tailor the solution to fit their needs."