

## issues brief

### No 29: Call for the establishment of a primary health care national minimum data set

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Deeble Issues Brief No 29 provides an argument in favour of the development of a Primary Health Care National Minimum Dataset. Recommendations have been made that focus on assisting Primary Health Networks (PHNs) in fulfilling their roles of: contributing to potentially preventable hospitalisations; attaining the highest standards in safety and quality; making meaningful use of eHealth Systems; and analysing health needs in their regions. Australia has recently established a Primary Health Care Data unit at the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare to lead the development of a National Primary Health Care Data Asset.

#### Issues

- To date no comprehensive, ongoing data sets exist in relation to how and why people use and access primary health care services, what occurs in individual consultations and the health outcomes that occur as a result of these services.
- Much of the data PHNs rely on for planning and commissioning of services come from proxy measures and data sources outside primary health care.

#### Recommendations

- The Australian Government should support the National Primary Health Care Unit at the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare to head the development of a primary health care national minimum dataset.
- PHNs should play an important role in equipping primary care staff to collect, maintain and report data through a national minimum data set.

**Table 1:** Data elements proposed for a PHC-NMDS required by PHNs and their expected outcomes

Data element	Description of data element	Expected outcomes
<b>Provider demographics</b>	Organisational and individual level information on the primary health care service provider, including: sex, year of birth, Indigenous status, type of provider	<p>Practitioner data is intended to provide workforce planning data for use regionally by PHNs and nationally by the Department of Health.</p> <p>Collect information which informs workforce planning and enhance understanding about the extent to which local capacity can meet local needs.</p>
<b>Patient demographics</b>	Information on the patient, including: sex, date of birth, country of birth, postcode of residence, Indigenous status, and preferred language.	<p>Ensure safe and quality health care is provided to patients through keeping current and accurate records.</p> <p>Ensure culturally appropriate services are delivered to patients.</p> <p>Measure the inflow and outflow of patients between PHN regions to more easily identify service gaps and inform service planning.</p> <p>Support identification and monitoring of health issues of concern for specific groups and assist in future service planning.</p>
<b>Patient health status and health-related behaviours</b>	Details on the current health status (e.g. chronic conditions) and lifestyle choices of the patient (e.g. risk factors such as smoking, alcohol use, diet, and physical activity).	<p>Identify potential areas for improvement and deliver quality care to patients.</p> <p>Conduct planning of primary health care services specifically targeting health needs, demands and requirements of the local community.</p> <p>Estimate and monitor prevalence of chronic conditions in local regions to inform health service planning.</p> <p>Measure risk behaviours in local regions and identify those at-risk of developing chronic conditions.</p>
<b>Patient encounters</b>	Patient reason for engaging in primary health care services, patient characteristics, diagnoses, frequency of referrals, and interventions.	<p>Identify public health trends and proactively respond by providing/commissioning more targeted programs/services.</p> <p>Avoid duplication of services provided to a patient.</p> <p>Improve collaboration between general practice and other primary health care services, and across the entire health system.</p>
<b>Health outcomes</b>	Information relating to the outcome of the consultation, including patient referral pathways.	Evaluate the effectiveness and efficiency of health outcomes achieved in the primary health care setting.