- The National Data Guardian has published a statement on her views on data sharing in the current pandemic and the Information Commissioner's Office have set out their position with regard to the actions of health and care professionals during this period.

Royal College of General Practitioners

BMA

Sharing information

Statement from the BMA GPC and the RCGP

At this time of global emergency it is essential that health and care professionals have immediate access to relevant clinical information that they need to provide the very best quality care for patients.

Self-isolation and social distancing may mean that patients engage with health and care professionals outside of their usual context, and normal arrangements for providing access to records may not then be practical.

The action taken by NHSX and NHS Digital to make access to patient records quicker for direct care purposes is therefore important and necessary.

As a result, professionals working at NHS 111, in urgent care settings or any GP practice will soon be able to access patient records on any other GP practice system using GP Connect to allow HTML access to records functionality.

NHS 111 clinicians will also be able to use GP Connect electronically to book patients who would benefit from further clinical follow up into a GP worklist following clinical assessment via the COVID-19 clinical assessment service (CCAS). They will also be able to send a message back to the GP practice regarding the outcome of consultation.

In addition, authorised, registered and regulated health and care professionals across the wider health and care system will be able to access a patient's Summary Care Record together with any additional information recorded in that SCR (SCR AI) where the patient has not dissented.

This will help health and care professionals to meet their legal obligations set out in the Notice issued on 20th March 2020 under Regulation 3(4) of the Health Service Control of Patient Information Regulations 2002 which "*requires the processing and sharing of confidential patient information amongst health organisations and other bodies engaged in disease surveillance for the purposes of research, protecting public health, providing healthcare services to the public and monitoring and managing the Covid-19 outbreak and incidents of exposure.*"

We therefore support the actions being taken by NHSX and NHSD during this emergency period including a national "switch on" of data sharing of records between practices which could be vital if any practice has to close or shared care arrangements are operating

specifically to care for patients with COVID-19 symptoms with patients then needing to be supported by others in the area.

We are assured that the use of these services will only be for the purposes as set out in the Notice and that this action is time limited to the period set out in the Notice, currently ending on 30th September 2020, but which is subject to possible further extension should the COVID-19 situation require it or revocation earlier.

We welcome the action being taken to avoid any unnecessary burden on practices including confirmation that no new Data Sharing Agreements will be required and the publication of a standard Privacy Notice addendum for practices to use.

We will continue to engage with NHSX and NHSD during the emergency period to ensure that the action being taken is proportionate and strikes a balance between making information readily available to provide the best care we can, whilst protecting the rights and expectations of patients.

Further information on the position of the Information Commissioners Office with regard to healthcare professionals is available at https://ico.org.uk/about-the-ico/news-and-events/news-and-blogs/2020/03/data-protection-and-coronavirus/

A statement from the National Data Guardian is available at https://www.gov.uk/government/speeches/data-sharing-during-this-public-health-emergency

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