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Renewed funding for electronic transfer of prescriptions (ETP) in the new 6CPA

eRx Script Exchange welcomes the continuation of funding for the electronic transfer of prescriptions in the newly signed 6th Community Pharmacy Agreement.

The new agreement includes \$12.6 million for ETP funding in the 2015-2016 financial year. An additional spend of \$48.3 million has been set aside for ETP and eHealth in the years following, subject to a cost effectiveness study in 2016.

According to Paul Naismith, pharmacist and CEO of the Fred IT Group, "This is good news for health users and health professionals. Electronic prescribing has become a vital part of the eHealth backbone, facilitating better communication between health professionals, more efficient work practices, and improved patient safety."

The 5th Community Pharmacy Agreement first introduced ETP funding as one of a number of measures to support the take-up of electronic prescribing. This included a 15c support payment for all electronic prescriptions that originated with a GP or other prescriber.

This funding has been pivotal in the rapid take-up of ETP: 73.8% of pharmacies surveyed in eRx's 2015 Pharmacy eHealth Survey described the funding as either extremely or very important in influencing their decision to use ETP. As a result, six years on from launch:

- 87% of pharmacies now use eRx
- 72% of doctors send ePrescriptions to eRx
- 24 million ePrescriptions were dispensed in December 2014 alone
- A total of 947 million ePrescriptions has been dispensed via eRx

These changes significantly improve patient safety as a result of the fact that patient and medication information is provided electronically by the GP, rather than being re-typed by pharmacists. This reduces the financial and human toll caused by mishaps with medications. The process has also created substantial improvements in allowing pharmacists to focus on patient care rather than on the manual process of entering prescription data.

ETP also forms part of the backbone of efficient and useful electronic health records (such as My Health Record, previously called the Personally Controlled Electronic Health Record, or PCEHR). Every time an electronic prescription is produced or dispensed, that data is shared safely and efficiently with the national repository, which means that health professionals will have access to a more complete picture of a patient's medications history.

Paul Naismith said, "We applaud the efforts of the Pharmacy Guild of Australia and the Australian Government in continuing to prioritise eHealth measures. We look forward to working with industry and government to deliver further health benefits in the five years to come."

Media queries: Roger Boot, eRx Script Exchange: 0488 488 610

About eRx Script Exchange

eRx Script Exchange is part of the Fred IT Group, Australia's leading provider of IT services to pharmacy. More than 3,000 pharmacies use Fred's ground-breaking technology solutions, which include Fred NXT, Fred Dispense, Fred Office, bundled 4G broadband and phone plans, eRx Express and more. Fred innovations such as eRx Script Exchange, Australia's first and largest national electronic prescriptions exchange, connect more than 20,000 doctors and 4,600 pharmacies to improve patient safety and dispensing efficiency.