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MEDIA RELEASE

Broadband solution to help meet health care's "greatest challenge"

The treatment of chronic illness in Australia has taken a major leap forward today with the announcement that the Commonwealth will support an online service for assisting doctors and patients to better manage diabetes.

cdmNet, a new health care service delivered over the internet, was announced today as a key IT infrastructure component for the Commonwealth's Diabetes Care Project. The project is an element of the Australian Government's efforts to reform the primary health care system and the treatment of Australians living with chronic illness.

It is believed the use of the internet for managing chronic disease can provide a breakthrough in what the American College of Physicians has called "the single greatest challenge facing organised medical practice".

The originator of **cdmNet** and CEO of Precedence Health Care, Professor Michael Georgeff, believes the use of web-based services such as **cdmNet**, combined with collaborative models involving entire teams of care providers, will transform the way health care is practised. According to Professor Georgeff, these advanced internet technologies are the only way we can create a sustainable health care system.

More than seven million Australians have a chronic disease at a cost to the health care system of more than \$60 billion per year.¹ The losses to the economy through reduced workforce participation rates and productivity are more than \$8 billion per year² while diabetes alone accounts for nearly a quarter of avoidable hospitalisations and 8% of deaths.^{3,4}

¹ AIHW, Chronic diseases and associated risk factors in Australia 2006

² Potential Benefits of the National Reform Agenda, Productivity Commission 2007

³ Public Health Information Development Unit

⁴ AIHW, Diabetes: Australian Facts 2008

Professor Paul Zimmet AO, Director Emeritus and Director of International Research at the Baker IDI Heart and Diabetes Institute says that the Diabetes Care Project will act as a model for the treatment of diabetes and other chronic diseases. He points out that people with a chronic disease such as diabetes need continuous care delivered by a team that may include their GP, an ophthalmologist, diabetes specialists and educators, dietitians , podiatrists, pharmacists and other health professionals.

According to Professor Georgeff, that need is often overwhelmed both by the complexity of interactions required of a care team and the overhead of paper-based health records.

“Delivering continuous care can be a huge burden on doctors and very difficult to put into practice. By using new internet and mobile technologies, **cdmNet** eliminates this complexity.”

Independent university trials of cdmNet have shown large improvements in the quality and effectiveness of care, including

- a doubling of GP productivity;
- a threefold increase in collaboration;
- a fivefold improvement in monitoring and follow up of patients; and
- a sixteen times increase in dietitian services and six-fold increase in medications reviews

These improvements are achieved because **cdmNet** efficiently links all members of a care team and, according to Professor Zimmet, is the best technology tool available for managing chronic illness.

cdmNet is already available to GPs and other health professionals across Australia. It has been adopted by RACGP Oxygen, the e-Health arm of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners, as the preferred IT solution for managing chronic illness.

The Commonwealth, through the Digital Regions Initiative, is supporting the use of **cdmNet** in regional, rural and remote areas of Australia including its potential to drive uptake and usage of the National Broadband Network.

cdmNet is also being used more widely to bring advanced information technology systems into health care. It is part of the national Personally Controlled Electronic Health Record (PCEHR) program in NSW and the ACT and is linking with other e-Health services, such as telehealth and e-prescribing, in the Victorian Science Agenda's Collaborative Care Cluster.

Further information

Professor Michael Georgeff

CEO Precedence Health Care

Mobile + 61 411 193 247

Office +61 3 9023 0800 during business hours