

## Pathology Results in MediTracker

### What is MediTracker?

MediTracker is a mobile app that allows patients access to a summary of the clinical information held in their GP record, to help keep them engaged in their care and safer in emergency situations. The GP summary medical record includes patient history, medications, allergies, immunisations, observations, and pathology results. It does not include GP notes or any data marked confidential.

### What consent is required for patient access to the GP summary record?

Both the patient and their GP must consent to the use of MediTracker for accessing GP data. Patient consent is granted on an individual basis. GP consent is based on an “opt out” model, where all consenting patients are provided access unless the GP decides to block access for the patient. This conforms to best-practice guidelines as recommended in the Report of the Primary Health Care Advisory Group.<sup>1</sup>

### How does MediTracker release pathology results to patients?

MediTracker takes a number of critical steps to ensure the safest possible release of results to patients, based on the evidence (see below):

- The results are only released after the GP views the results, actions them, and stores them in the patient record
- The GP practice can set a delay for the release of the results to the patient from 1 to 20 business days, allowing sufficient time to communicate with the patient
- The results are only provided to the patient and, with patient consent, to a care team selected by the patient and their GP
- MediTracker displays practice contact information with a ‘tap to call’ feature, enabling patients to easily book an appointment with their GP to discuss the results.

### Can the patient’s GP prevent access by the patient to their results?

Yes. At the time of ordering the pathology tests, the GP can block release of these results to the patient via MediTracker. This block remains in place for all pathology results until the GP decides to release it.

### Does release of pathology results improve patient safety?

Yes. Evidence<sup>2,3</sup> shows that timely release of pathology results directly to patients improves patient safety and also encourages patients to take a more active role in their own care (e.g., see the Report of the Primary Health Care Advisory Group<sup>1</sup>).

### Does release of pathology results increase patient anxiety?

Evidence<sup>4</sup> indicates that patients may be more likely to experience anxiety while waiting for test results than receiving them in a timely way. Other evidence shows that releasing pathology results after the GP has viewed and actioned the result significantly decreases patient anxiety compared to release prior to GP curation. MediTracker takes the

conservative position of only releasing pathology results after they have been viewed and actioned by the patient's GP. This minimises patient anxiety while optimising patient safety.

### **How long is a reasonable delay for release of pathology results?**

The recommended delay for automated release to the patient is 7 days (5 business days) after test completion by the pathology lab (see <https://ama.com.au/gp-network-news/my-health-record-update-release-8>). MediTracker takes a more conservative view and sets the default delay to 5 business days after being viewed and actioned by the GP. The general practice can change this setting at any time up to 20 business days.

### **Does releasing pathology results to patients increase practice workload?**

No, evidence<sup>3</sup> suggests that the release of pathology results using MediTracker will at worst result in a two percent increase in office contact from patients seeking information about their results.

### **Can patients receive their results prior to their GP viewing them?**

Yes, but not with MediTracker. MediTracker requires the GP to have viewed and actioned the results prior to release to the patient. However, most pathology labs allow the patient to receive results directly from the pathology lab without GP intervention. Also, My Health Record will provide access to results within 7 days of release by the pathology lab.

### **Does MediTracker increase GP liability?**

No. Releasing results via MediTracker may reduce, rather than increase, duty of care liability by the GP. US studies<sup>5</sup> found that 8–26% of abnormal test findings are not followed up in a timely manner resulting in significant malpractice claims<sup>6,7</sup>. Similar results can be expected in Australia.

The major indemnity insurers in Australia have confirmed that their insurance coverage includes the use of MediTracker.

### **Does MediTracker conform to Australian privacy principles?**

Yes. MediTracker protects patient privacy through security at multiple levels. Precedence complies with all Australian privacy principles and legislation.

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<sup>1</sup> Report of the Primary Health Care Advisory Group 2017.

<http://www.health.gov.au/internet/main/publishing.nsf/Content/primary-phcag-report>

<sup>2</sup> Michael E. Matheny, et al. Impact of an Automated Test Results Management System on Patients' Satisfaction About Test Result Communication. *Arch Intern Med.* 2007;167(20):2233-2239.

<sup>3</sup> Francesca Pillemer et al Direct Release of Test Results to Patients Increases Patient Engagement and Utilization of Care, *PLoS One.* 2016; 11(6)

<sup>4</sup> Traber Davis Giardina et al. Releasing test results directly to patients: A multisite survey of physician perspectives. *Patient Education and Counseling.* Volume 98, Issue 6, June 2015, Pages 788-796

<sup>5</sup> Casalino LP, Dunham D, Chin MH, Bielang R, Kistner EO, Karrison TG, et al. Frequency of failure to inform patients of clinically significant outpatient test results. *Arch Intern Med.* 2009;169(12):1123–9. Epub 2009/06/24.

<sup>6</sup> B.D. Gale, D.P. Bissett-Siegel, S.J. Davidson, D.C. Juran Failure to notify reportable test results: significance in medical malpractice. *J Am Coll Radiol,* 8 (November (11)) (2011), pp. 776-779

<sup>7</sup> T.K. Gandhi, A. Kachalia, E.J. Thomas, A.L. Puopolo, C. Yoon, T.A. Brennan, *et al.* Missed and delayed diagnoses in the ambulatory setting: a study of closed malpractice claims. *Ann Intern Med,* 145 (October 3 (7)) (2006), pp. 488-496