

"Commonwealth Health Department going for data grab under cover of COVID"

While Australia is focussed on COVID, the government acts to quietly collect our personal health data.

The Department of Health funded project, Primary Health Insights, has been uploading detailed health records from GP databases.

Industry sources have revealed that up to 25 million individual health records have been uploaded to "the Cloud".

400 items of medical data per patient include medications and prescribing dates, including opioids, antidepressants, antipsychotics, MBS items, allergies, alcohol consumption, diagnoses, pathology dates and results, including STIs, chlamydia, gonorrhoea, syphilis, hepatitis, HIV, HPV and pap smear information.

While almost 10% of Australians opted out of My Health Record, most may be unaware they are giving consent to their default data upload, when they sign the patient registration form to see their own doctor.

This form may state that they consent to the disclosure "of de-identified information for research."

The Western Australia Primary Health Alliance, implementers of the project, define information as "de-identified" for Primary Health Insights if key identifiers like name, address and Medicare number have been removed.

The Department of Health published "de-identified" health data of 3 million Australians in 2016, claiming, "Patients and providers cannot be re-identified."

This data was downloaded more than 1,000 times before being withdrawn, after researchers showed it could be identified.

Researchers and unspecified others may access the data through the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare.

Juanita Fernando, Health Committee Chair of the Australian Privacy Foundation said, "This seems to be the best kept secret in Australia."

The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare and the Department of Health have been contacted for comment.



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