

Australian Standard™

**Health Care Client Identification**

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This Australian Standard was prepared by Committee IT-014, Health Informatics. It was approved on behalf of the Council of Standards Australia on 8 May 2002 and published on 3 June 2002.

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The Pharmacy Guild of Australia  
The University of Sydney

The following interests participated in the preparation of this Standard:

State and Territory Health Departments  
General Practice Coordinating Group  
Private Hospitals Association  
Divisions of General Practice in each State/Territory  
Institute for Healthy Communities  
Privacy Commissioners (Commonwealth/State)  
Health Issues Centre

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**Health Care Client Identification**

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## PREFACE

This Standard was prepared by the Australian members of the Joint Standards Australia/Standards New Zealand Committee IT-014 *Health Informatics*, in response to requests from the health service provider community. After consultation with stakeholders in both countries, Standards Australia and Standards New Zealand decided to develop this Standard as an Australian Standard rather than an Australian/New Zealand Standard.

This Standard is the result of health industry concern about the myriad of data storage formats used for basic but critical client identification data.

Its objective is to provide the health industry with a specific Standard for Health Care Client Identification for clinical and administrative data management purposes, which promotes uniformly good practice in identifying individuals and recording identifying data so as to ensure that each individual's health records will be associated with that individual and no other. The Standard also provides the basis for future linkage of data as authorized by law and appropriate for clinical management of patients and statistical research purposes.

In this initial publication, the scope of the Standard has been limited to Health Care Client Identification in Australia only. In the future, consideration will be given to New Zealand and international requirements, Health Service Provider Identification Standards and Data Matching and Linkage Standards.

NOTE: Data Matching and Linkage are noted as future work items.

This Standard does not supersede any other Standards but rather acts as a consolidation of best practice principles and guidelines for collection and storage of Health Care Client Identification data. Where these exist Standards already in use in health care have been sourced in preference to generally applicable Australian Standards.

The term 'informative' has been used in this Standard to define the application of the appendix to which it applies. An informative appendix is only for information and guidance.

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## FOREWORD

Within a health care service delivery context, the process of positively identifying individuals entails matching data supplied by those individuals against data the service provider holds about them.

The ability to positively identify individuals and locate their relevant details is critical to the provision of speedy, safe, high quality, comprehensive and efficient health care. Benefits of positive identification include:

- (a) More complete information on which to base potentially life-critical clinical decisions.
- (b) Less time wasted and inconvenience generated in hunting for and/or regaining information – which translates to more efficient health care.
- (c) Less duplication of testing and prescribing.

In Australia and internationally, the delivery of health care is undergoing paradigm changes, brought about by changing consumer expectations, technological advances, economic pressures, socio-demographic change and changes in the patterns of health and ill health in communities.

These changes include:

- (a) A shift from institution-centred care to client-centred care, together with greater empowerment of health care consumers.
- (b) Greater emphasis on continuity of services supporting quality and safety, health promotion and maintenance.
- (c) More integrated health care, in which organizational and administrative barriers are invisible to clients.

These new service directions will necessitate a much greater flow of health care clients and services across functional, jurisdictional, administrative and professional boundaries. In a more integrated health care environment, positive identification is no less critical, but is much more complex. Population mobility and multiple points of access to the health care system lead to the accumulation of client related data in a variety of fragmented, unrelated repositories. Positive health care client identification is recognized around the world as a critical success factor for health care reform.

There are many barriers to successfully identifying individuals in health care settings, including variable data quality; differing data capture requirements and mechanisms; and varying data matching methods. This Standard provides a framework for improving the confidence of health service providers and clients alike that the data being associated with any given individual, and upon which clinical decisions are made, is appropriately associated.

Where permitted by law, data matching may be undertaken in a variety of contexts and settings, including for administrative purposes. While administrators may also benefit from the application of this Standard, its specific focus is the *positive identification of clients for health care service delivery purposes*.

There are additional factors to be considered in providing *access* to distributed health care client data, including privacy, security and data transfer mechanisms. These are outside the scope of this Standard. Application of this Standard will increase the *capacity* for data access—authorization of such access is determined by the application of legislation, organizational policies and guidelines, and professional ethics.

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STANDARDS AUSTRALIA

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**Australian Standard**  
**Health Care Client Identification**

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SECTION 1 INTRODUCTION

**1.1 SCOPE**

This Standard is a voluntary code of practice. It provides a framework for improving the positive identification of clients in health care organizations.

This Standard applies in respect of all potential or actual clients of the Australian health care system. It defines demographic and other identifying data elements suited to capture and use for client identification in health care settings, provides guidance on their application, and provides an overview of data matching strategies. It also makes recommendations about the nature and form of health care identifiers.

**1.2 OBJECTIVES**

The objectives of this Standard are to promote uniformly good practice in—

- (a) identifying individuals; and
- (b) recording identifying data so as to ensure that each individual's health records will be associated with that individual and no other.

**1.3 APPLICATION**

This Standard is primarily concerned with clinical use of Health Care Client Identification data. The Standard should be used by health and health related establishments that create, use or maintain, records on health care clients. Establishments should use this Standard, where appropriate, for collecting data when registering health care clients or potential health care clients.

**1.4 RESPONSIBILITIES**

The positive and unique identification of health care clients is a critical event in health service delivery, with direct implications for the safety and quality of health care.

Responsibilities for the quality of capture, storage and use of identifying data for health care clients, including the implementation of this Standard, should be clearly and unambiguously assigned within the health care establishments, and documented in relevant policies, procedures and work instructions. This may particularly apply to those establishments seeking third party accreditation from relevant quality management or assurance organizations.