



Ideas in Technology - Health - Education - Society

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Media Release: Re-identification of Medicare Data

Future Wise calls on the Federal Government to halt plans for secondary use of myHealthRecord data and to undertake a wide-ranging review of arrangements surrounding linkage of public health and administrative data, following the announcement today of the potential for reidentification of patient information by a research group from the University of Melbourne.

Future Wise spokesperson, Dr Trent Yarwood said "This research from Drs Culnane, Rubinstein and Teague reveals the true privacy threat of data linkage and data retention - the combination of "deidentified" datasets with other publicly-available data leading to very small cell sizes and the ability to identify highly personal health information.

"The National Digital Health Strategy highlighted the high value Australians place on the privacy of their health data", Dr Yarwood went on, "The public must be able to trust that the confidentiality of their information is protected".

"Data linkage has the potential for major population health benefits, however the complexity of the data and the increasing power of big data means that privacy may not be as well protected as many - including health researchers - think it is. It's essential that they understand that the technology behind deidentification is not infallible", Dr Yarwood concluded.

Future Wise is an independent policy and advocacy organisation, and works on technology, health, and education; and is a strong voice for digital privacy in Australia.

Further information about Future Wise is available on our website:

<https://futurewise.org.au>

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