

Survey of attitudes towards the Australian health system

Menzies Centre *for*
HEALTH POLICY



Part 1: Privacy

The Menzies Centre for Health Policy and The Nous Group recently surveyed 1200 Australians to understand their attitudes towards the health system.

Respondents were asked to answer questions regarding expectations, confidence and satisfaction with the system, along with questions on health literacy, private health, privacy and Commonwealth-State relations.

Most respondents would prefer a system in which health professionals have direct access to a patient's record

Q: Most people, at some stage of their lives, have health problems that require the help of a number of doctors or other health professionals.

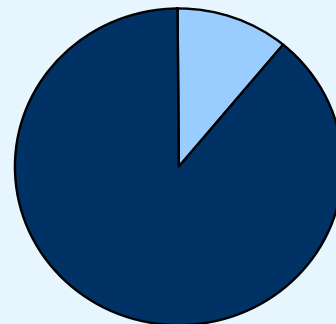
When that happens doctors and other health professionals often have to rely on what the patient tells them about their condition rather than on the records taken by the health professionals who have previously seen the patient.

Would you prefer:

- (a) a system in which each health professional has to rely on the patient's account or
- (b) a system in which health professionals can gain access directly to a patient's record?

Figure 1 - Access to a patient's record by health professionals

Prefer direct access to a patient's record (89%)



Prefer reliance on the patient's account (11%)

Source: Menzies Centre for Health Policy / The Nous Group Survey of Attitudes Towards the Australian Health System, 2008 (N = 389)

Only one-third of respondents think that confidential access to health records *without a patient's consent* is an invasion of privacy

Q: Some people say that doctors should be able to see a patient's medical record if they need to provided they keep the information confidential.

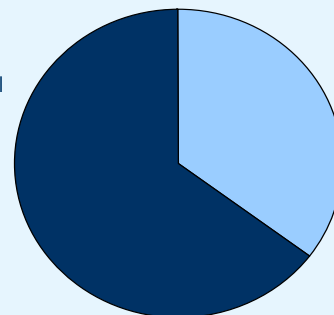
However, others say that for anyone in the health system to see a patient's medical record without their consent would be an unwarranted invasion of privacy.

What do you think:

- (a) would it be alright for those in the health system who need the information to access medical records on a confidential basis; or
- (b) would accessing such records without the patient's consent be an unwarranted invasion of someone's privacy?

Figure 2 – Confidential access to health records without consent

Think access to medical records on a confidential basis is alright (65%)



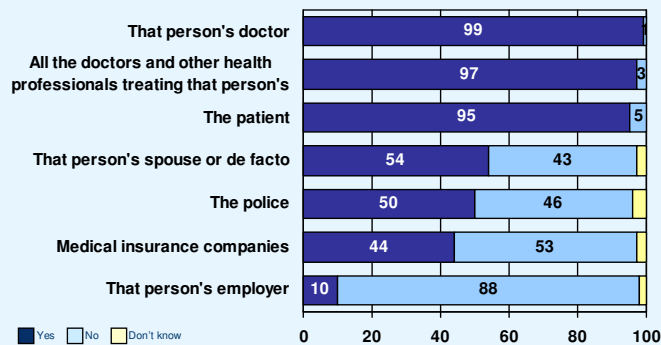
Think access without consent is an invasion of privacy (34%)

Source: Menzies Centre for Health Policy / The Nous Group Survey of Attitudes Towards the Australian Health System, 2008 (N = 423)

Almost all respondents agreed that *the patient and all those treating them* should have access to their medical records

Q: Who do you think should be able to access a patient's medical records?

Figure 3 – Access to health records



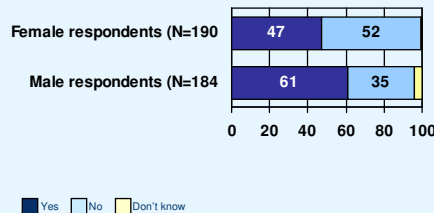
Source: Menzies Centre for Health Policy / The Nous Group Survey of Attitudes Towards the Australian Health System, 2008 (N = 373)

(Order of responses was randomised during survey)

Male respondents were more comfortable with their spouse or de facto accessing their medical records; while those with higher education levels were less comfortable with access by the police

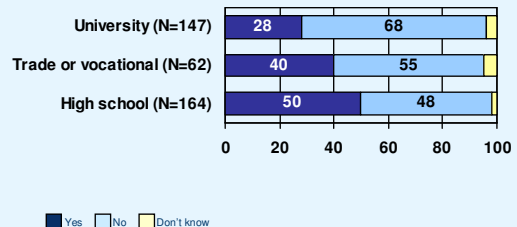
Q: Who do you think should be able to access a patient's medical records?

Figure 4 – Responses to 'that person's spouse or de facto' by gender



Source: Menzies Centre for Health Policy / The Nous Group Survey of Attitudes Towards the Australian Health System, 2008 (N = 374)

Figure 5 – Responses to 'the police' by education level



Source: Menzies Centre for Health Policy / The Nous Group Survey of Attitudes Towards the Australian Health System, 2008 (N = 373)

The Menzies Centre for Health Policy is a joint venture between The Australian National University and the University of Sydney.
www.menzieshealthpolicy.edu.au

The Nous Group is a management consultancy that assists individuals and organisations to maximise their performance. Nous works extensively across the public, private and not-for-profit health care sectors.
www.nousgroup.com.au

Survey methodology

The survey was conducted nationwide among Australian residents aged 18+, between July 21 and August 5, 2008. The number of respondents was 1200.

Interviews were conducted by telephone using random digit dialling CATI (Computer Assisted Telephone Interviewing)

The data were post-weighted by age, sex, state and education to reflect the population distribution. Fieldwork and post-weighting were carried out by Q & A Market Research.

Respondents were divided into three approximately equal groups for the privacy section.