



Issue: Numerical Filing of Client Medical Records

Raised by: Remote Medicare Quality Support, David Ashbridge (Assist Sec. Health Services)

Background: Implementing a numerical filing system at the time of sorting the client's medical records for the 'Client Medical Record Standardisation' project has been raised.

Discussion: The Medical Records Standardisation Project provides an opportune time to implement a numerical filing system for the client's records. The proposed numerical filing system is based on the Client Master Index* (CMI) and would employ terminal digit filing of the CMI (as currently used in the medical records depts of DHCS hospitals, Bagot CHC and Tiwi Health Services - although the Tiwi numerical system is not based on the CMI). 2 **coloured coded number stickers** would be placed on the protruding right hand side back cover, of the medical record cover. More specific file location is by the third last digit of the CMI, which would be written above the 2 coloured stickers. See diagram on second page.

Best Practice features of a numerical filing system are noted to be:

- Colour coded to assist record location and easy identification of misfiled records
- Fulfills draft proposal of the Australian Council of Healthcare Standards
- Meets client confidentiality requirements
- Prepares the path for future IT systems based on the CMI (e.g. PCIS)
- Is a Territory wide patient unique identifier

When **accessing files** the client's CMI would be sourced from either hard copy or electronic listing of the health centre's population list, held in both forms at every health centre. The list could be presented in various ways, i.e. sorted by surname, first name, various spellings etc. The list would be regularly upgraded and amended.

A long standing issue in some health centres has been the easy access for community members to go to the files and retrieve either their own, or other's, medical records. A numeric system is anticipated to help address this aspect of reduced **confidentiality assurance**.

The prospect of asking health centre staff to implement this system is unreasonable in day to day operations, but is assessed to be feasible as part of the file standardisation project, along with being the logical time for **implementation**.

Numeric filing / colour tabbing would require different cabinets or compactus in many health centres, as the system would not be effective in existing filing cabinet drawers. Therefore an **upgrade of cabinets** where required, would be a prerequisite to accepting the plan to institute numerical filing.

Visitor files are not deemed to be part of the file standardisation project, and as such will be filed separately. Standard processes around visitor files will need to be established and this will be described in due course.

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* Note: The Client Master Index (CMI) and Hospital Record Number (HRN) are normally the same. However, there are numerous occasions where individuals in the NT have been allocated more than one HRN. Part of the Medical File Standardisation Project will be to compare existing lists to identify those duplications, and where relevant, determine a "priority HRN" to bring in line with the NT wide CMI.

Best Practice Communique

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Remote Health Branch



Some health centres keep **outstation/homelands files** in separate boxes for use on clinic runs. This practice could continue. Possibly the use of tracer cards in the main filing system would be beneficial to flag those files held in the separate boxes.

To date, many health centres have filed records in **different groupings** (e.g. < 5's). While potentially this provides some benefits when conducting program work, such groupings would retain a cumbersome factor within a move to numeric filing. The advent of electronic listings will allow much easier compilation of lists for program work, avoids transfer of files when individuals move from one grouping to another, and reduces mislocation of files.

Consultation: RDH Medical Records Dept (Praveena Narayan), Bagot CHC (Margaret Stewart), Clinical Applications Training and Support (Linda Lukitsch). PCIS (Steve Schatz), Tiwi Health Services.

References: - Australian Council of Healthcare Standards, Draft 2.3 - Information Management.
- Australian Standard 2828

Outcome: Numeric filing of medical records is recommended for all Remote Health Branch health centres.

This recommendation is subject to assurance that implementation is part of the medical records standardisation project (or other external assistance being provided to remote health centres to carry out the changeover), and the provision of suitable cabinets to make introduction of terminal digit filing workable.

Example Medical Record Cover

The diagram shows a medical record cover with the following fields and annotations:

- PRINCIPAL NAME** and **OTHER NAME/S** (top left)
- ADDRESS** (bottom left)
- RECORD. No.** with value **1021341** (top right)
- D.O.B.** with a date format **__/__/__** (middle right)
- COMMUNITY CARE CENTRE** (bottom right)
- MEDICAL ALERT** (bottom right)
- CONFIDENTIAL RECORD** (bottom left)
- Stickers** (vertical column on the right):
 - Top sticker: empty
 - Second sticker: **3**
 - Third sticker: **4** (highlighted in green)
 - Fourth sticker: **1** (highlighted in red)
 - Bottom sticker: **NAME**

Annotations with arrows:

- HRN** points to the RECORD. No. field.
- Stickers** points to the vertical column of stickers.
- 3rd last digit** points to the digit **4** in the third sticker.