

Electronic Health Record Sharing System (Amendment) Bill 2025 to be gazetted on Friday

The Government announced today (March 19) that the Electronic Health Record Sharing System (Amendment) Bill 2025 will be gazetted on Friday (March 21). The Bill aims to refine the existing legal framework of the Electronic Health Record Sharing System (eHealth) to tie in with and support its function enhancements and continuous development.

The Bill seeks to amend the Electronic Health Record Sharing System Ordinance (Cap. 625) to expand and enhance the data collection, sharing, usage and protection mechanism of eHealth, in tandem with the "eHealth+" five-year development plan. "eHealth+" serves to transform eHealth into a comprehensive healthcare information infrastructure to complement the healthcare reform, including promoting primary healthcare, improving workflow efficiency and facilitating cross-boundary services, thereby providing citizens with more coherent and high-quality healthcare services.

Building a comprehensive personal electronic health record (eHR) for citizens

The Bill will provide a legal framework for building a comprehensive personal eHR for citizens, including streamlining the consent mechanism. Once citizens agree to join eHealth, their healthcare providers (HCPs) will be able to deposit health data into their personal eHealth accounts. Meanwhile, citizens will continue to retain full control over their personal data and can grant individual HCPs access to their eHealth records at their own will.

At present, most private HCPs have registered with eHealth and frequently access the records with individual citizens' consent, but only a few would deposit records of the services provided into citizens' eHealth accounts. The Bill will empower the Secretary for Health to require specified HCPs to deposit important specified health data into the personal eHealth accounts of citizens registered with eHealth. Such arrangement can assist citizens in obtaining their records from HCPs and enhance service efficiency.

Supporting primary healthcare development and service process management

To support the development of primary healthcare services provided by multi-disciplinary teams, the Bill will expand the scope of healthcare professionals (HCProfs) who can access health data on eHealth. In addition to the existing 13 types of HCProfs subject to statutory registration, HCProfs registered with the accredited professional bodies under the Department of Health's Accredited Registers Scheme for Healthcare Professions, and other specified HCProfs that provide healthcare in healthcare facilities controlled or managed by the Government and the Hospital Authority (such as the District Health Centres under the Primary Healthcare Commission) will also be

included. With citizens' consents, these HCProfs may access their health data on eHealth when providing healthcare for them.

Electronic medical documents, including medical certificates, prescriptions, and healthcare referrals, can reduce the risk of losing paper documents and facilitate convenient access and use of the documents by citizens. The Bill will provide a clear legal framework for governing electronic medical documents issued or authenticated through eHealth, and enabling the Government to designate eHealth as the only platform for issuing certain medical documents under appropriate circumstances, in order to facilitate the centralised management and support the usage of these documents.

Supporting citizens in using healthcare services across the boundary

The use of cross-boundary healthcare services has become increasingly common among citizens. At present, citizens can self-carry their own eHRs for cross-boundary uses via the eHealth mobile application. To better support citizens' needs, the Bill will introduce provisions to provide for the recognition of individual HCPs and public health record systems outside Hong Kong (e.g. service providers under the Elderly Health Care Voucher Greater Bay Area Pilot Scheme), subject to sufficient protection of data privacy and system security as well as due compliance with specified requirements and conditions. This will enable citizens to use their eHRs across the boundary in a more convenient and secure manner.

If an individual citizen uses services at a recognised HCP outside Hong Kong, he/she can choose to authorise the HCP to securely access his/her eHealth records and deposit the health records of the services received into his/her personal eHealth account, with a view to enhancing the quality and safety of cross-boundary healthcare services. HCPs outside Hong Kong can only access and deposit citizens' eHealth records when a registered citizen provides explicit consent when using its services. Under no other circumstances will eHealth records be transmitted across the boundary.

Refining the legal provisions for the access and use of eHealth data

The Bill will also refine the legal provisions governing the access and use of eHealth data. Among other things, the Bill will empower the Government and other authorised persons to use identifiable data in eHealth for the purposes of enrolling citizens in, administering, and evaluating government healthcare programmes. The Bill will also specify that citizens and specified categories of related persons, such as parents of minors and authorised caregivers, may provide to and obtain eHealth records of the citizen, thereby empowering citizens' self-management of health records.

The Bill will be introduced into the Legislative Council for First Reading on March 26.