

Data Linkage

Frequently Asked Questions (FAQs)

What is data linkage?

Health data linkage securely links de-identified patient data with other de-identified data sets to better understand a patient's journey across different parts of the health system, such as primary and hospital care. This feature is already available within the Primary Sense platform.

Is data linkage a new method?

Data linkage is not new, it is an established method, routinely used across government and university sectors to better understand population health in WA since 1995. WA Primary Health Alliance (WAPHA) are seeking to apply this safe and secure method to better understand the needs of GPs and their patients.

Why is data linkage a benefit to the sector?

Data linkage can help WAPHA to better understand the patient journey throughout the health system, measure the relationship between primary care and hospital activity, and deliver the right services where they are needed most, to support you and your patients.

What can we learn using data linkage?

Data linkage is an established methodology to better understand population health. Data linkage can help WAPHA better understand the health needs of particular patient cohorts across primary and hospital care.

Is data linkage secure? Will anyone see my patients' details?

The security of data linkage is governed by your Primary Sense Data Sharing Agreement (DSA) and does not require the release of patient identifiers. This ensures your patients' privacy is protected and their data is accessed responsibly, securely stored and managed in Australia by the existing PHN-owned Primary Health Insights hosting platform.

I don't want anyone to know about my patients' health problems. Does this mean people will be able to find out?

Patient details are protected through privacy preserving record linkage that uses one-way encryption to link data sets so that patients cannot be re-identified.

Where will the data be stored?

The data will not leave the [Primary Health Insights](#) platform, which features multiple layers of [security](#) and a comprehensive [governance framework](#). It complies with the Australian Privacy Principles and legislation.

Is patient consent required?

Explicit patient consent is not required, because this data collection aligns with the purpose for which the information was originally collected and is governed by your Primary Sense DSA.

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What data governance is in place?

This process will be governed by your Primary Sense DSA, ensuring privacy will be protected and data will be securely accessed, stored and managed in Australia by the existing PHN-owned Primary Health Insights hosting platform.

Will data be used for research?

For matters involving research (or purposes to be interpreted as research), WAPHA relies on Section 95 of the Privacy Act and the National Statement on Ethical Conduct of Human Research (NHMRC) – stringent governance of these matters is also addressed in your Primary Sense DSA.

How can I learn more?

If you have any further questions or concerns about data linkage within Primary Sense, you can directly contact WAPHA Analytics and Insights Manager, Dr Christina Read, via email: christina.read@wapha.org.au

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