

Orion scores A\$11m Aussie contract

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New Zealand's biggest software exporter, Orion Health, has won an A\$11 million (NZ\$14m) contract as part of an A\$467 million project to roll out electronic health records in Australia.

Orion is part of a consortium led by consultancy Accenture, and which also includes Oracle, which has just scored A\$77m in software contracts.

The electronic health records will provide a complete summary of a person's health history that could be accessed by both clinicians and the patient to improve the quality of healthcare.

In most countries, including Australia and New Zealand, health records are spread across different providers and siloed systems, meaning clinicians and patients are unable to get a complete view.

Australia's Health Minister Nicola Roxon has promised every Australian who wanted a personal electronic health record would have access to one by July next year.

Orion will provide its clinical desktop software. It gives people access to a range of different systems so, for example, they can see patient records, lab results and X-rays through a single portal.

Orion said it was unable to comment on the project and referred questions to Accenture.

It has also formed a strategic partnership with the Canterbury District Health Board that will see it road test and collaborate on products with staff there.

Chief executive Ian McCrae said its clinical desktop software was used by about two-thirds of hospitals in New Zealand and the remainder would soon be adopting it.

However, many of its other products were being installed overseas "many timezones away".

"It's really important for us to have our products installed in this country so we can see them in use and learn from those implementations. It's hard to get feedback when your initial sites are not in New Zealand.

"Canterbury always has been an innovative district health board and there is a lot of innovation amongst the New Zealand medical sector. What this relationship gives us and Canterbury is an outlet for that innovation."

Orion has about 14 staff in its Christchurch office – which opened in February – and that would eventually grow to between 50 and 100, McCrae said.

Canterbury DHB chief medical officer Dr Nigel Millar said the partnership was a "unique opportunity to tailor-make tomorrow's technology to suit our needs".

"We are now what is known as a reference site for health technology – this means the eyes of the world will be watching with interest to see the innovative solutions that are developed in conjunction with Orion."

New Zealand's National Health IT Board has said New Zealanders will have electronic health records by 2014.

DHBs have split into four regions and are integrating their health systems and technology infrastructure in preparation for the move.

McCrae said having a smaller number of systems and datacentres made "huge sense".

"We're moving to four regions but you might argue that one day we should just be one integrated delivery network and our IT systems should be run like that."

Orion is also part of an Accenture and Oracle consortium that last year won a A\$146m contract to deliver electronic health records in Singapore.