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Towards understanding cybersecurity capability in Australian healthcare organisations: a systematic review of recent trends, threats and mitigation

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ABSTRACT

Cybersecurity threats in the Health sector are increasing globally due to the rising value of sensitive health information and availability of digitalised personal health records. This systematic review compares international and Australian health system cybersecurity landscapes in relation to the introduction of universal electronic health records. It examines recent trends in healthcare cybersecurity breaches that can disrupt essential services if patient safety and privacy are compromised. Often health systems and health managers are ill-equipped to mitigate such threats. Recommendations are provided to proactively mature the cybersecurity culture within healthcare organisations, thus increasing their resilience to cyber threat.

Introduction

Healthcare is a ubiquitous need and affects every person in society. The healthcare sector is responsible for collecting and storing highly sensitive and confidential data whilst simultaneously being required to share it amongst medical staff, patients and other organisations. HealthCare Systems (HCS) are compelled to evolve with advances in technology. The transition of healthcare from hospital centred, specialist focused approaches to distributed, patient centred care has been facilitated through health record digitalisation¹ and is widely recognised as both inevitable and essential.² Breaches of HCS cybersecurity that expose personal information or data will negatively impact both patients and the healthcare institution, with potentially life-threatening consequences.³ The cybersecurity risk to healthcare, including ransomware attacks, hacking of personal medical devices and theft of personal medical data, is continuously rising.⁴ Stolen health records are worth more than records from any other industry,⁵ due to the high value of personal information.⁶ Sold on the darkweb, they can fund criminal activity and enable identity theft, blackmail, extortion and even murder.⁷ In 2015, the US Office of Personnel Management (OPM) and Anthem Health, which provides healthcare for Federal employees, were both hacked within months of each other, apparently by the same perpetrator.⁸ This means the hackers can link personnel records with sensitive health data for federal employees and enable targeted harm to high-value individuals.⁹ Despite a global increase in cyberattacks on health entities the healthcare sector has significantly trailed other sectors in the ability to secure its critical data.¹⁰ Cybersecurity in healthcare is identified as an emerging health security challenge, but there is low awareness in the health sector of the risk.¹¹ A healthcare cybersecurity capability approach is required to address increasing cyberthreats. The recent introduction of a universal electronic medical record My Health Record (MHR) in Australia provides an opportunity to examine healthcare cybersecurity capability.

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Health cybersecurity capability is the capacity of the organisation or sector to produce an outcome, such as proactive cyber-awareness and defence.¹² Healthcare institutions have traditionally been focussed on patient care and not cybersecurity and pursued the electronic health record as a holy grail of optimal patient care. Yet healthcare lags behind other sectors in both securing data and developing comprehensive employee cybersecurity training programs.¹³ As patient information grows in both volume and value, health managers are required to develop cybersecurity capability across organisations. Cybersecurity capability development includes updating existing information technology but also recognising the need for, and proactively acquiring, new technology, cybersecurity talent and comprehensive organisation training.¹⁴

The paradigm shift to digitalised healthcare requires information technologies to store vast amounts of electronic patient information across diverse operating systems.¹⁵ The integration of new technologies with outdated, legacy or unsupported operating systems compromises interoperability and increases cybersecurity vulnerability.¹⁶ The 2017 global WannaCry ransomware attack¹⁷ provides a stark example of this. Widespread use of obsolete Windows XP software¹⁸ in combination with ignored cybersecurity warnings to undertake system upgrades enabled the malware to spread across the National Health Service (NHS) in the UK. WannaCry severely affected NHS' ability to provide patient care for a week between 12–17 May 2017, spread to 200,000 computers in over 100 countries, and is the largest malware cyberattack to date.¹⁹ WannaCry had not specifically targeted the healthcare sector,²⁰ but was able to spread to 80 out of 236 NHS trusts and 603 primary care organisations across England²¹ due to poor cyber-hygiene and a lack of appreciation amongst healthcare executive management of the business risk impact of cyber breaches.²² Ambulances had to be diverted, diagnostic equipment was infected, pathology and radiology unable to function, patient records were inaccessible and nearly 7000 medical appointments were cancelled.²³

Healthcare has the reputation of 'low security maturity',²⁴ and lacks sophisticated data security tools compared to other industries.²⁵ This is due to budgetary constraints,²⁶ lack of cybersecurity training and awareness among health managers, the heterogenous healthcare information infrastructure, and innumerable wireless connected devices.²⁷ Current healthcare cyber-defence is often reactive and undertaken after malicious attack.²⁸ The retrospective nature of healthcare cybersecurity,²⁹ along with sector reliance upon perimeter defence (antivirus, firewalls) for protection³⁰ compounds cyber risk. Such measures are unlikely to protect against sophisticated and persistent attacks³¹ or mitigate insider threats.³² Other significant barriers to healthcare cybersecurity are lack of appropriate cybersecurity professionals working in health,³³ constantly emerging and evolving malware threats,³⁴ and complex network infrastructure.³⁵

Aims

- To compare the international and Australian health system cybersecurity landscape in relation to introduction of the universal MHR in Australia.
- To examine recent trends in healthcare cybersecurity breaches in Australia and worldwide.

Methods

A systematic review of the relevant literature and background information regarding global cybersecurity in health systems and digital medical records was conducted using the PRISMA criteria. Ten databases in total were searched: Medline/PubMed; Embase; Emcare; CINAHL; Psycinfo; Web of Science; Scopus; Compendex; IEEE; and Google Scholar Advanced Search to obtain grey literature. The key concepts utilised were e-health records AND cybersecurity. The keywords used in the search are listed below:

- Electronic health records/OR medical record, computerised/OR digital health record* OR electronic medical record*

- Cyber security/OR data security/OR medical identity theft/OR terrorism/OR Malware/OR Ransomware OR Cyber adj4 (crime OR attack OR security OR threat OR terror)

The Google Scholar Advanced Search utilised 'healthcare AND cybersecurity' to obtain grey literature such as conference proceeding books, conference papers and thesis dissertations. Due to the emergent nature of electronic health records, the current social and political debate around privacy and security and the recent changes to MHR implementation, the decision was made to include media reports. The Factiva database was utilised to search relevant media articles. Key concepts were health data breach AND MHR. The search process is illustrated below in [Figure 1](#).

Study eligibility

Articles were considered for inclusion if they were:

- English language publications,
- Published between 2014–2019 in a peer reviewed or scholarly journal,
- Full-text version of the manuscript, conference paper or prospective thesis/paper,
- Strategy, Guideline, Report or Policy review documents which provide relevant subject insight or recommendation

Study selection

Studies were selected if they discussed an issue related to cybersecurity in healthcare either in the title or the abstract. Studies were excluded if their content was not specific to cybersecurity within healthcare, or if they were focused solely on presenting a technical algorithmic solution without discussion of the general cybersecurity landscape. Two independent reviewers checked titles and abstracts as collated on a shared EndNote library.

Information synthesis

The findings of the included studies were synthesised narratively into themes which included:

- (1) Theme 1 – emerging trends in cybersecurity risk,
- (2) Theme 2 – cybersecurity capability countermeasures and mitigation strategies,
- (3) Theme 3 – current cybersecurity issues within Australia.

An analysis of Australian healthcare cybersecurity capability is presented in the discussion session.

We also reviewed the accreditation requirements of the two peak bodies in health management in Australia, the Australian College of Health Systems Management Australia and the Royal Australasian College of Medical Educators, for health cybersecurity as a curriculum requirement.

Results

We identified 316 relevant records. Of the 316 records, 100 outlined cyberattacks on HCS. The common cyberattack types identified in the review are defined and categorised in [Table 1](#) below. Mitigation strategies were presented in 131 of the records. An additional 29 records outlined cyber risk or cyberattack type, but also presented a specific countermeasure to potentially mitigate the threat discussed. A total of 27 records presented findings relevant to the Australian context. A summary of findings is presented in [tables 2](#) and [3](#).

Ten systematic reviews were identified as part of the search, 5 of which were published since 2018. There were 32 Reports included as relevant to this review. These included official

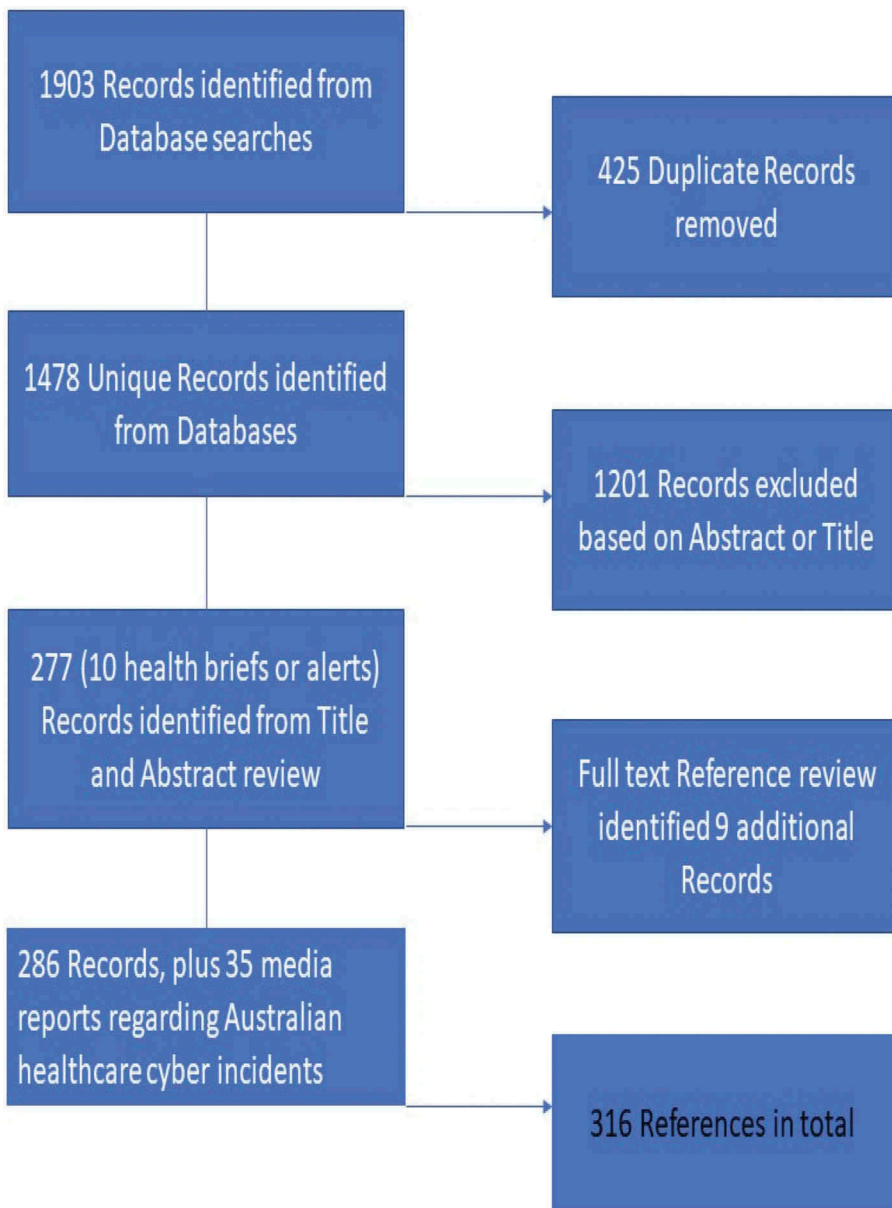


Figure 1. Flow chart of literature search screening process.

Government responses to data breaches ($n = 3$), Australian Government publications ($n = 9$), cybersecurity industry benchmark reports ($n = 9$), the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners cybersecurity position paper ($n = 1$), and finally a joint academic and consumer group report. Grey literature was identified and included to address publication bias. A total of 15 Conference Proceeding papers and 4 dissertation thesis papers were identified. The results are summarised in Table 1–4. Table 1 shows HCS Cybersecurity Attack and Threat Categories, Table 2 shows a summary of findings under Theme 1 (Cybersecurity Threat and Risk Landscape), Table 3b shows a summary of findings under Theme 2 (Cybersecurity Capability, Countermeasures and



Table 1. HCS cybersecurity attack and threat categories.

Attack Type	Definition and Examples	Threat Category
Hacking	The use of a computer to gain unauthorized access to data in a system to enable theft or destruction. ^a Mimikatz steals credentials from accessed server domains to enable network compromise. Used with other tools in NotPetya ^b	Accessibility & Integrity via system and network infiltration and Confidentiality of credentials.
Distributed Denial of Service (DDoS)/Denial of Service (DoS)	DDoS/DoS attacks are main threats to the availability of physical and network systems. Creates traffic jamming that disrupts communication through interference or collision, overflowing the buffer memory of network cards, and broadcasting spoofed network packets. ^c Network flooding with useless data traffic exhausts network resources making it unavailable to the authentic users. ^d Able to be spread by mobile applications and can be refined to also exfiltrate information.	System Accessibility
Malware	Computer code created with malicious intent, often spread through phishing. Can disrupt entire organisation or lie dormant until initiated. Masqueraded as legitimate upgrades and used in the 2015 Anthem Health Insurance attack. ^e	Accessibility through DoS, or attack to vendor supply chains; Integrity of data through encryption; Confidentiality via data breach/theft
Ransomware	Encrypts files on compromised computers for cryptocurrency ransom. ^f Potentially life threatening as decryption key may not be provided after payment. ^g Able to avoid detection and only encrypt specific information ^h or can spread across entire network. ⁱ New ransomware code is developed at a rate of 100,000 a day. ^j In 2019 it compiled over 70% of malware incidents. ^k Spread via inadvertent download of code through infected websites or most commonly in healthcare, in phishing emails. ^l	Integrity, Accessibility and Confidentiality of physical and network systems and data
Phishing	Indiscriminate scam emails that contain malware allowing attackers entry into the system by installing a virus, or to trick users to reveal credentials. ^m Can create a 'beachhead' to launch other attacks – often to install malware. ⁿ Increasingly sophisticated and role targeted, often employing follow up messages or calls to encourage opening infected links. ^o Used to deploy Remote Access Tools such as JBiFrost. ^p	Accessibility & Integrity via email compromise & computer intrusion to enable administrative control. Due poor cyber-hygiene practices of end users
Spear phishing	Carefully targeted emails to small groups or individuals using personalised information to 'verify' the message & link. ^q	Confidentiality of targeted credentials
Command and Control Obfuscators	Can both disguise the actor's communication within an infected network to evade detection and re-direct network traffic to alternate hosts/ports. Has been used to exploit Windows vulnerabilities. ^r	Network and web server compromise affecting Accessibility, Integrity and Confidentiality
Lateral Movement Frameworks	Continued penetration tools that escalate privileges, collects credentials and enables information download. Able to move across a network and operate from memory making detection difficult. Can be used to initiate inter-organisation phishing exercises.	As Above
Sinkhole	Internet of Things (IoT) and/or medical device compromise at network level that diverts all network traffic to a compromised sensor node. As it is an active attack can escalate to DoS. ^s	Confidentiality, Accessibility and Integrity
Wormhole	Uses packet or relay connections to form a tunnel between two attackers to route data. Can potentially affect any device with connection to a wireless sensor network. ^t	As Above
Sybil	Sensor nodes are provided with multiple identities creating redundant or false information from medical or monitoring devices. ^u	Integrity of vital patient information

(Continued)



Table 1. (Continued).

Attack Type	Definition and Examples	Threat Category
Hello Flood	Attackers with high powered transmitters can create a signal that appears to be in proximity to the device to mimic a parent node for eavesdropping or to broadcast data to the entire network. ^y	Confidentiality
Cryptojacking or Crypto Mining Malware (CMM)	Malware introduced to draw huge organisational computing power and network resources to covertly mine digital currency. ^w CMM detections increased 459% between 2017 to 2018. ^x	
Orange Worm malware	Installs backdoor software that lies dormant within systems to target healthcare supply chains such as pharmaceuticals, IT companies and medical device vendors, potentially to enable economic espionage by nation-states. ^z	Accessibility of supply

Key: Orange = System Threat; Blue = User-based Threat; Green = Mobile or medical connected device Threat

^aCarter, "Considerations for Genomic Data Privacy and Security when Working in the Cloud."
^bAustralian Cyber Security Centre (ACSC), Joint report on publicly available hacking tools.
^cAlmohri et al., On Threat Modeling and Mitigation of Medical Cyber-Physical Systems.
^dAhanger & Aljumah, "Internet of things: A comprehensive study of security issues and defense mechanisms."
^eInstitute for Critical Infrastructure Technology (ICIT), Industry Brief: Hacking Healthcare.
^fWirth, "Cyberinsights. The Times They Are a-Changin': Part One."
^gBoddy et al., "An investigation into healthcare-data patterns."
^hLee, Moon & Park. CloudRPS: a cloud analysis based enhanced ransomware prevention system.
ⁱSitig & Singh. "A Socio-technical Approach to Preventing, Mitigating, and Recovering from Ransomware Attacks."
^jSpence et al., "Ransomware in Healthcare Facilities: A Harbinger of the future?"
^kVerizon, 2019 Data Breach Investigations Report.
^lLee, Moon & Park. CloudRPS: a cloud analysis based enhanced ransomware prevention system.
^mInstitute for Critical Infrastructure Technology (ICIT), Industry Brief: Hacking Healthcare.
ⁿWright, Aaron & Bates. "The Big Phish: Cyberattacks Against U.S. Healthcare Systems."
^oWirth, "Cyberinsights. The Times They Are a-Changin': Part One."
^pAustralian Cyber Security Centre (ACSC), Joint report on publicly available hacking tools.
^qWright, Aaron & Bates. "The Big Phish: Cyberattacks Against U.S. Healthcare Systems."
^rAustralian Cyber Security Centre (ACSC), Joint report on publicly available hacking tools.
^sAhanger & Aljumah, "Internet of things: A comprehensive study of security issues and defense mechanisms."
^tIbid.
^uIbid.
^vIbid.
^wBDO USA Healthcare, Brace for the Breach - Cyberthreat Insights 2019.
^xVerizon, 2019 Data Breach Investigations Report.
^yBDO USA Healthcare, Brace for the Breach - Cyberthreat Insights 2019.



Table 2. Summary of findings – Theme 1 Cybersecurity Threat and Risk Landscape.

Outcomes (sub-themes)	International Records	Australian Records	Comments
Medical Cyber Physical Streams (MCPS) and/or Medical Internet of Things (MIoT)	40	5	Lack of interoperability combined with the vulnerability caused by MCPS intrinsic attributes are recognised as the most significant emerging cybersecurity threat in international records
Breaches of privacy, confidentiality and/or consent for data use	24	8	Australia (TGA) and US (FDA) greater MCPS regulation than UK/Europe
Cloud Computing	11	1	Australian records remain predominantly concerned with threats to data protection, privacy and confidentiality.
Malware	10	1	Issues of consent are discussed concurrently with data protection in Australian records.
Health Apps	8	3	Recognised in international records as a potential attack vector to data in storage and transit
Insider threat	7	1	Lack of Australian records outlining malware specific threats. Australian malware information accessed through Australian Government publications (Office of Australian Information Commissioner or Australian Cyber Security Centre).
			Information security issues and lack of regulation of health apps are addressed in recent records, especially when endorsed for use in mental health and dementia
			Paucity of records discussing this despite cybersecurity industry recognition it is the leading cause of data breach worldwide.

Population: Digitalised/electronic health records, personal health information and data

Setting: Healthcare Systems (HCS)

Intervention: International cybersecurity risks and threats (n = 100)

Comparison: Australian cybersecurity risks and threats (n = 19)



Table 3. Summary of findings Theme 2 – Cybersecurity Capability, Countermeasures and Mitigation strategies.

Outcomes (sub-themes)	International Records	Australian Records	Comments
Cryptographic architecture or technological solutions	51	11	International and Australian focus on technological solutions rather than holistic capability building approaches, education, or recognition of insider threat.
Risk assessment and governance	22	1	A comparison of risk assessment frameworks is presented in Table 4.
Regulation and/or legislation	16	0	A comparison of regulatory and legislative protection is presented in Table 4.
Holistic approach/Proactive cybersecurity culture	12	0	The importance of developing a proactive culture that engages all employees is presented in recent international records
Education and/or simulation	9	1	The need for practical, scenario-based education and simulation is emphasised, especially to address inadvertent insider threat
Capability and cyber maturity	5	0	System and organisational maturity to detect, identify, plan and manage data and infrastructure protection.
Cyber-hygiene			Digital security practices such as strong passwords, 2 factor authentication, encryption of shared patient information and data etc.

Population: Digitalised/electronic health records, personal health information and data

Setting: Healthcare Systems (HCS)

Intervention: International cybersecurity capability, protective countermeasures or mitigation (n = 131)

Comparison: Australian cybersecurity capability, protective countermeasures or mitigation (n = 15)



Table 4. International regulatory frameworks for data privacy and security.

Country	Framework/Regulation	Remit
European Union	General Data Protection Regulation (GDPR) 2018 is designed to harmonise data privacy laws across Europe to protect against privacy and data breaches.	Applies to all personal data held by an organisation. Breaches reported to the Information Commissioner's Office with fines for non-compliance up to €20 m.
United Kingdom	Data Protection Bill 2017	
United States	Health Insurance Accountability and Portability Act (HIPAA) 1996 and Omnibus 2013	Privacy and security rules. Mandatory end-to-end encryption of data that is in motion and at rest. Mandatory education of staff, ^a risk assessment ^b and breach notification. Non-compliance can lead to substantial fines of millions of dollars.
United States	The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST Framework)	Guidelines on security and privacy in public and cloud computing. Framework for Improving Critical Infrastructure Cybersecurity, 2018 includes five capability categories: identify, protect, detect, respond, and recover. Not specific to healthcare. ^c
United States	Food and Drug Administration (FDA).	Oversight of medical devices process, regulatory decision making, post-market surveillance, and product development life cycle. ^d
Canada	Canadian Personal Health Information Protection Act (PHIPA) 2005 update. Personal Information Protection and Electronic Documents Act (PIPEDA) of 2005.	Includes health technology and allows data deidentification for health systems planning, delivery, and design. Audits undertaken by Privacy Commissioner.
Australia	My Health Records Act and Privacy Act (the My Health Records Rules and Regulation), Australian Privacy Act 1988, and the Data Privacy Amendment, Notifiable Data Breaches Act 2017	Outlines the role of health records and technology: organisations can conduct data linkages if patient privacy is protected during re-identification. Consent required. ^e Covers the collection, use and disclosure of the personal health information, as well as penalties. Expanded upon in the next section.
Global	International Organization for Standardization (ISO)	No clear distinction made between those who control or own personal information and those who process personal information. ^f Used by Australian Digital Health Agency (ADHA). Comprehensive but complex and expensive to implement. ^g

^aUpendra et al., "Operationalizing Medical Device Cybersecurity at a Tertiary Care Medical Center."

^bAbouzakhar and Angelopoulou, Internet of Things Security: A Review of Risks and Threats to Healthcare Sector.

^cAkinsanya, Papadaki & Sun. Current Cybersecurity Maturity Models: How Effective in Healthcare Cloud?

^dSchwartz et al., "The evolving state of medical device cybersecurity."

^eThakkar & Gordon, "Privacy and Policy Implications for Big Data and Health Information Technology for Patients: A Historical and Legal Analysis".

^fFlaumenhaft & Ben-Assuli. "Personal health records, global policy and regulation review."

^gAkinsanya, Papadaki & Sun. Current Cybersecurity Maturity Models: How Effective in Healthcare Cloud?

Mitigation Strategies) and [Table 4](#) shows the identified international regulatory and legislative frameworks for data privacy and security.

Theme 1 – Emerging trends in cybersecurity risk

Cyber-attacks can occur at any connection of the network and at any endpoint. Interoperability of software, operating platforms, medical device interfaces and information exchange networks is an essential requirement of a digitalised health system and is crucial to cybersecurity risk management.³⁶ The emergence of medical cyber physical streams, wireless connectivity and the advent of medical applications in healthcare have exponentially increased attack surfaces and vectors.³⁷ Protecting every entry point to the health system is now impossible.³⁸

Medical cyber physical systems

This term encapsulates Medical Internet of Things (MIoT) and medical devices, both implantable and wearable. Medical Cyber-Physical Systems (MCPS) are increasingly used in hospitals to provide high-quality healthcare and have emerged as promising platforms for monitoring and controlling multiple aspects of patient health.³⁹ It is estimated there will be 20 billion connected devices by 2020, and 50 billion by 2028.⁴⁰ The intrinsic features of MCPS increase their inherent security risks.⁴¹ These features make MCPS myriad, mobile, heterogenous and increasingly ubiquitous.⁴² They are often left unattended (as in implantable devices) to record intimate physiological data and are constrained in size, power and memory function which provides them only basic security capability.⁴³ MCPS features make them vulnerable to compromise⁴⁴ meaning their connection to and reliance upon the healthcare network significantly increases the cybersecurity risk to the entire healthcare system.⁴⁵ MCPS have become considerable potential attack vectors⁴⁶ to enable intrusion by malicious actors, installation of malware and alteration of treatment delivery.⁴⁷ Cybersecurity measures such as vulnerability scans or patch management are often not available⁴⁸ or only possible by manufacturers.⁴⁹ There exists an international lack of clarity on post-sale ownership, software update and security regulation of MCPS.⁵⁰ Manufacturers may be reluctant to provide documentation detailing device cybersecurity vulnerabilities⁵¹ or patching and upgrade policies⁵² as this is viewed as proprietary information. The absence of healthcare standards⁵³ to promote MCPS interoperability⁵⁴ increases incompatibility⁵⁵ between different healthcare systems and medical devices⁵⁶ and creates a healthcare vendor market that pushes patient devices to market before cybersecurity issues are addressed.⁵⁷ The cybersecurity vulnerability of medical devices and the lack of vendor and regulatory oversight has been recognised as a strategic priority by the Australian Therapeutic Goods Administration.⁵⁸

Data confidentiality, privacy and consent

Privacy of confidential patient data and issues concerning the use of personal information was the next sub-theme identified. Risk to personal information can be categorised as cybersecurity threats to healthcare confidentiality, accessibility and integrity.⁵⁹ Confidentiality is compromised through loss of personal health records or data, as well loss of consumer confidence.⁶⁰ Accessibility to health records, software platforms, operating systems and hardware is affected through denial of service (DoS) malware or ransomware attacks.⁶¹ Integrity of health data is exposed if it is corrupted, deleted or altered; or if wireless communication to essential devices or monitors are compromised.⁶²

Healthcare is both a vulnerable and attractive target for cyberattack due to its economic size⁶³ and broad attack surface.⁶⁴ An increased focus by the health sector on cybersecurity is warranted considering the criticality of the health sector and the type of user information stored within health information systems.⁶⁵ Health information and medical data are highly valuable assets to patients, healthcare providers and identity thieves alike.⁶⁶ Estimates place health data as between ten⁶⁷ and

twenty times⁶⁸ more lucrative than credit card or banking details. Credit card or banking details can be changed if stolen. Uniquely identifiable health history or data cannot.⁶⁹

Cloud computing

Cloud computing was identified as a cybersecurity risk to data and information both during transfer and storage. The huge volume of health information produced has made centralised storage, encryption, deployment and maintenance of data prohibitive at the individual organisation level.⁷⁰ The advent of cloud computing allowed storage, processing and analysis of data to be outsourced to a remote server.⁷¹ Cloud models share the cost of data accessibility and management, as well as sharing the cybersecurity risks – the scalability and efficiency of cloud computing means any potential breach exposes data to a far wider audience.⁷² There are two attack vectors possible with cloud storage – attacks to data at rest which modifies or replaces information; and attacks to data in motion occurring during transfer to or from geographically distributed cloud servers. Encryption technology is essential to ensure the security of patient health information and data stored on cloud platforms.⁷³ A compromised host operating system could enable attackers to access hypervisor processes and services (such as a virtual machine monitor, a computer software, firmware or hardware that creates and runs virtual machines) and, potentially, any client application.

Malware

Records under this sub-theme discussed malware generally or applied examples such as the WannaCry attacks in the UK. Malware attack types and threat categorisation is outlined in detail in Table 1.

Health application ('app') security

The combined ubiquity of use and paucity of security provisions of Health apps are recognised as an increasing cybersecurity risk to the confidentiality of personal data and to the integrity of interconnected HCS infrastructure. Health apps can generate, store, and process huge volumes of identifiable health data.⁷⁴ The ubiquity, simplicity, low cost and improved encryption of WhatsApp, makes it attractive for telemedicine services⁷⁵ in resource constrained settings⁷⁶ and to facilitate professional networks and team communication.⁷⁷ Use of WhatsApp is now so commonplace amongst clinicians that urgent guidelines are required to ensure that clinicians do not inadvertently breach patient privacy or confidentiality.⁷⁸

Mental health apps are promoted by health services as a discreet, accessible and affordable alternative to face-to-face therapy.⁷⁹ However, little research exists examining the safety and security of apps in medical practice, or of the proliferation of apps endorsed for mental health and dementia. A recent Australian study found that over half of government endorsed apps did not have a privacy policy to inform users how personal information would be collected, retained or shared with others.⁸⁰ Patient confidentiality and safety⁸¹ or the security of communications,⁸² are often not considered by app developers who are largely unregulated in terms of content, authorship or trustworthiness.⁸³ The author of a cross-sectional survey investigating the privacy and information security of health apps in wearable devices⁸⁴ identified a lack of awareness among respondents (n = 106) regarding the confidentiality or security of the data collected from their wearable device apps, including what was obtained and how it was transmitted or stored. The author postulates that these results reflect a wider lack of knowledge about potential data security and privacy risks throughout the general population. That these apps have received government endorsement for use in those with dementia and mental illness is of concern. Without adequate security provisions in place, health applications can be vulnerable to both active and passive attacks, resulting in data modification or theft.⁸⁵

Insider threat

That cybersecurity mechanisms within health do not appropriately address the issue of insider threat as the ‘entry point’⁸⁶ for ransomware was the final sub-theme identified (n = 7). Most data breaches involve some level of insider cooperation, either intentional or not.⁸⁷ Not recognising or responding to phishing emails remains a substantial problem⁸⁸ with email the most common vector through which healthcare organizations are attacked.⁸⁹ Most insider issues are due to ignorance rather than malice, but accidental error is equally damaging, making the lack of health information technology and cyber-hygiene knowledge an important threat. Studies indicate that respondents use weak or insecure passwords and are unaware of data security violation procedure.⁹⁰ Malicious intent as it relates to cyber-attacks is poorly understood and requires the integration of human factors into cybersecurity risk assessment to fully understand and characterise its impact upon mitigation strategies.⁹¹ Inadvertent information leakages will remain inevitable due to the innumerable risks associated with collaborative sharing in complex healthcare network systems.⁹²

Theme 2 – cybersecurity capability, countermeasures and mitigation strategies

The mitigation of risk to and protection of sensitive health information is now a global concern. The concept of a Cybersecurity Centre for Threat Control (based on the US Centers for Disease Control or a Cyber World Health Organisation)⁹³ is suggested to enable global recognition of the need for international collaboration to combat cybercrime. The incorporation of data breach response into organisational disaster plans, along with proactive partnerships between governments, industry and providers to enhance and develop collective security across healthcare sectors is advocated.⁹⁴

Cryptographic architecture or technological solutions

There is strong emphasis, both in the international and Australian records, upon technological solutions and advanced cryptology to promulgate cybersecurity solutions. The greatest number of records identified (n = 63) concerned technological cybersecurity protective architecture, often developed by the authors of the records. It is beyond the scope of this paper to compare and discuss the different cryptographic security available to address data sharing and storage of patient information across network systems, cloud environments or through remote patient monitoring systems.⁹⁵ However, two cryptographies will be briefly mentioned due to their broad applicability and potential benefit for health specific challenges. The first, homomorphic encryption (HE) ensures strong security and privacy guarantees whilst enabling analysis on encrypted data and sensitive medical information.⁹⁶ Fully homomorphic encryption is versatile but has substantial computational requirements that at present slows processing significantly.⁹⁷ HE can also be used in mobile devices to transfer and store medical data without decrypting it, preserving privacy if a node is compromised.⁹⁸

The second is Blockchain. Blockchain is a peer-to-peer distributed ledger technology that was initially used in the financial industry.⁹⁹ Its characteristics of decentralization, verifiability and immutability enable blockchain to securely store personal medical data.¹⁰⁰ Immutability ensures that any data, once stored in blockchain, cannot be altered or deleted.¹⁰¹ Applications in health include integration of health information,¹⁰² aggregation of data for research.¹⁰³ In blockchain all the data, including the keywords and the patients’ identity are public key encrypted with keyword search. Challenges to blockchain include scalability, security and cost.¹⁰⁴ Whilst blockchain itself is secure, it can be accessed through stolen credentials and root privilege exploits.¹⁰⁵ Blockchain technology will require more research before large-scale production implementations.

Risk assessment and governance

Healthcare data breaches continue to rise¹⁰⁶ with at least one data breach per day in the health industry globally.¹⁰⁷ The average total cost of a healthcare data breach in 2019 was 6 USD.45 million

compared to the 2017–18 average of 4 USD.08 million. This is 65% higher than the average total cost of a data breach in any other industry.¹⁰⁸ On average, it takes the healthcare industry longer than any other to identify (mean 236 days) and rectify (93 days) a data breach.¹⁰⁹ The longer a breach goes unnoticed, the greater the estimated cost. The importance of comprehensive cybersecurity risk assessment therefore cannot be underestimated in order to proactively identify vulnerabilities and detect threats or system breaches.¹¹⁰ This must include detailed assessment and analysis of the cybersecurity risk and vulnerability of all information technology hardware, software, MCPS and vendor or third-party partner cybersecurity agreements.¹¹¹ Healthcare cybersecurity risk assessments and strategy frameworks should be standardised across jurisdictions and should include stipulations that demand vendor cybersecurity compliance and accountability.¹¹² The National eHealth Security and Access Framework v4.0 (NESAF) is the Australian cybersecurity risk assessment framework developed to guide health sector data protection and eHealth security.¹¹³ The applicability, practicality and adoption of NESAF in practice is difficult to determine. The National Institute of Standards and Technology (NIST) Framework, which was developed in the US as a healthcare specific cybersecurity assessment model, could be adopted to the Australian healthcare context,¹¹⁴ and is used in HCS across the US.

'Whitehat' or 'Ethical' hackers¹¹⁵ should also be utilised to regularly test and assess cyber vulnerabilities. 'Whitehats' are professional hackers who undertake penetration and infiltration exercises and attempt to breach cybersecurity defences.¹¹⁶

Regulation and/or legislation

Securing the privacy of collected information and data is a major concern of patients¹¹⁷ and the reason why many withhold consent for the use of their data in research.¹¹⁸ Patient privacy specifically refers to 'the right of patients to determine when, how, and to what extent their health information is shared with others.'¹¹⁹ Regulatory and policy oversight can decrease data and privacy breaches, as indicated by the HIPAA Omnibus Rules 2013¹²⁰ which restricted healthcare vendor access to patient information.¹²¹ However comprehensive policy will not guarantee cybersecurity if not reflective of actual healthcare practice, culture or infrastructure limitations, as evinced in the NHS with WannaCry. Nor will it entirely protect against insider agents.¹²²

A comparison of international privacy and security frameworks and regulations is presented in Table 2.

Holistic approach toward proactive cybersecurity culture

There is recognition within the international literature that healthcare cybersecurity is a complex socio-technical challenge¹²³ requiring a holistic integrated approach¹²⁴ to improve staff awareness,¹²⁵ competence,¹²⁶ and mitigation of threats across the industry. The international records also highlight the importance of developing a proactive cybersecurity culture,¹²⁷ in which compliance to protecting information is embedded.¹²⁸ Significantly, this theme is not discussed within the Australian records.

There is also recognition that merely enforcing security policies and procedures will not drive cultural change or learning.¹²⁹ Healthcare leadership must embrace cybersecurity and develop strong cultures of cyber-vigilance¹³⁰ throughout organisations and amongst all staff¹³¹ to develop a robust, proactive incident response. Building a culture that systematically and continuously analyses the cyber context of an organisation will enable vulnerabilities and threats to be identified.¹³²

Education and simulated environments

That staff cybersecurity education is the most important strategy¹³³ against data breaches is not addressed in the identified Australian records. The essential need for comprehensive employee training and education¹³⁴ to enable the identification and assessment of risk¹³⁵ is discussed throughout the international records. Cybersecurity simulation models¹³⁶ indicate that experienced managers make

less effective cybersecurity decisions than novices, as they are more likely to seek an optimal decision utilising past experiences. The unpredictable 'zero-day' cyber-attacks and ever evolving nature of cyber threats often means optimal reactive decisions are not possible. Rather, the capability to make proactive preventative decisions is key. As employees are often the inadvertent facilitators of security breaches,¹³⁷ behavioural skills training and education to raise privacy-protection awareness and change habitual information technology habits into conscious cybersecurity decisions is required.¹³⁸ Staff will engage with cybersecurity if interventions are not costly (i.e. time consuming or onerous) and if self-efficacy is enhanced through active involvement in the training.¹³⁹ Simulation based training¹⁴⁰ to practice and develop cybersecurity capabilities can facilitate this.¹⁴¹ The magnitude of cybersecurity organisational capability and individual employee skills required to mitigate the risk of vulnerabilities and breaches cannot be underestimated.¹⁴²

Capability and cyber maturity

Cybersecurity capability is identified as a strategic asset that every health organization must adopt,¹⁴³ along with the concepts of building organisational resilience and the capacity to learn from mistakes.¹⁴⁴ Cybersecurity capability includes the skills, knowledge and competence¹⁴⁵ of the workforce, organisation, sector and nation to detect, mitigate and protect against threat. The Australian HCS is recognised as having low cybersecurity capability maturity.¹⁴⁶ The lack of an Australian healthcare cybersecurity capability model is recognised as a significant security risk in a country that has adopted an opt-out digitalised health record with MHR.¹⁴⁷

Cyber-hygiene practices

Organisational cyber-hygiene practices are recognised as mandatory safeguards that include email data encryption of patient information, antivirus software, software updates, and at least two-factor authentication patient data stored or shared on cloud platforms.¹⁴⁸ Cyber-hygiene can be practised at employee level, such as in recognition and escalation of suspicious emails, or through enforcement of organisational policy regarding information sharing and protection.¹⁴⁹

Theme 3 – current cybersecurity issues within Australia

"In Australian cybersecurity, there are only two types of healthcare organisations – those that know they've been hacked and those that don't know they've been hacked".¹⁵⁰

The average cost of a data breach in Australia in 2018 was estimated to be 2 USD.5 million.¹⁵¹ It takes Australia a mean of 200 days (compared to 185 in 2017) to identify a data breach and 81 days to contain the breach incidents.¹⁵² A cross-sector survey of 1894 senior executives and senior IT managers found that almost 70% of data breaches reported in Australia during 2018 were directly attributed to human error.¹⁵³ The number of documented data breaches involving the My Health Record (MHR) system in 2017–18 was 42, an increase from 35 the preceding year.¹⁵⁴

At present the Office of the Australian Information Commissioner (OAIC) Notifiable Data Breaches only cover private providers and not public institutions or healthcare systems. This makes it extremely difficult to gauge an accurate picture of the cybersecurity landscape within Australia. An independent cybersecurity report of 4067 cyber incidents, many of which were not included in the quarterly Notifiable Data Breach reports, was undertaken during 2018.¹⁵⁵ The report analysis estimated that there were 445 healthcare cyber incidents in Australia in 2018 which equated to almost 24% of the Australian cyber breach total. Crucially, the report found that the healthcare industry had the lowest cybersecurity capability maturity of any Australian industry to identify and manage risks and to protect against or contain attacks. Specifically, the health sector lacks the capability to anticipate and respond to vulnerabilities and has a very high risk of experiencing a cyber incident within 12 months.¹⁵⁶ In 2018, no community healthcare providers had a dedicated budget for cybersecurity, and only 16% of public hospitals allocate funds specifically to cybersecurity.¹⁵⁷ Over

40% of clinical, specialist non-clinical, and administrative health staff believe they have no responsibility for cybersecurity, and 6.2% of Australian health organisations are unable to undertake operating system updates or patches due to legacy and end of life systems.¹⁵⁸

MHR is the Australian digital health record that supports clinical care and is accessible to authorised health care providers wherever and whenever health services are initiated. The accuracy and relevance of the MHR is a joint responsibility of the individual and health care provider/s.¹⁵⁹ MHR is intended as an integrated eHealth Record 'to provide a consolidated record of an individual's health information for consumers to access and as a mechanism for improving care co-ordination between care provider teams'.¹⁶⁰ However, this probably remains an ambitious ideal given the unique challenges and complexities of the Australian federated funding model combined with the ambiguous responsibilities of the commonwealth and states in relation to different aspects of healthcare delivery.¹⁶¹ As of 28 July 2019, MHR has a 90.1% participation rate across Australia, with 16,400 healthcare providers registered to the system.¹⁶² The legislative framework underpinning the My Health Record system include My Health Records Act 2012,¹⁶³ My Health Records Rule 2016 and My Health Records Regulation 2012.

The Australian Digital Health Agency (ADHA) is the System Operator of MHR. Healthcare organisations and providers are required to report potential or confirmed data 'breaches' involving MHR to the System Operator (the ADHA). MHR data breaches must also be reported to the OAIC, except where the healthcare provider organisation is a state or territory authority.¹⁶⁴ The Digital Health Cyber Security Centre (DHCSC) provides operational security support for the MHR on behalf of the ADHA. During a national healthcare sector cyber crisis, the DHCSC is responsible for coordinating responses across the health sector in liaison with other Government organisations such as the Australian Cyber Security Centre and CERT (Computer Emergency Response Team) Australia.¹⁶⁵ In other words, the ADHA coordinates the cybersecurity response for major for cybersecurity breaches potentially caused by its own system vulnerabilities.

There is a paucity of research within Australia to measure or gauge Government, public-private sector or users' cybersecurity capacity to adopt or engage with an electronic health system such as MHR,¹⁶⁶ or to measure public understanding or perceptions of the potential use of their data in research.¹⁶⁷ A 2016 study¹⁶⁸ of the Personally Controlled Electronic Health Record (PCEHR) which essentially incarnated into MHR in July 2018, identified a multitude of security weaknesses. PCEHR consisted of a distributed network of interconnected systems with multiple interfaces required to enable a variety of providers, services and applications have access. The potential security weaknesses included system misconfiguration and implementation flaws, inconsistent authorisation policies and authorisation errors, and insecure transfer of privileges between healthcare providers in the PCEHR system.

An analysis of the timeline of Australian electronic health record development and an examination of the failed 'HealthConnect' project which preceded it (and which subsequently has been removed from Department of Health websites)¹⁶⁹ concludes that enduring tensions exist between those seeking to enhance the widespread availability of individual health information reform, and those who view it as a threat to privacy. There appears to be an inability to seek compromise or learn from divergent viewpoints and values. This has been particularly evident since the transition of MHR to an opt out system¹⁷⁰ which commenced on 16 July 2018 and was extended to 31 January 2019.

An important note of interest and consideration in the Australian cybersecurity context is that the healthcare industry is not included as critical infrastructure in the Australian Security of Critical Infrastructure Act 2018. In contrast, healthcare is recognised as critical infrastructure internationally.¹⁷¹ The cybersecurity challenges created by digital health transformation requires universal cross-sectoral governance and coordination that emphasises 'healthcare as Critical National Infrastructure'.¹⁷² This concept must be identified and protected. Creating cybersecurity silos in which healthcare is separate from other critical infrastructure could potentially weaken healthcare cybersecurity defence and capability.

Health security breaches in Australia

The following section draws on current open access media reports to ascertain the extent of health related 'breaches' or 'incidents' occurring within Australia. It is not intended to be exhaustive, but rather indicative of public awareness around the issues of cybersecurity as it relates to health generally and MHR specifically. As this is an emerging topic there are limited scholarly studies published.

Medicare has been plagued with security and privacy issues. Medicare details have been found available for sale on the dark web,¹⁷³ though any 'breach' of MHR was denied by ADHA: *'there has not been a cyber security breach of our systems as such, but rather it is more likely to have been a traditional criminal activity'* (involving a likely insider).¹⁷⁴ In 2016 the Australian government published a deidentified data set comprising the health details of 10% of the Australian population with information collected since 1984.¹⁷⁵ A week later a group of University of Melbourne academics privately informed the government that it had been able to re-identify the entire data set. The government immediately withdrew the data set from the website, however access logs indicated the data set had been downloaded 1,500 times but could not indicate who had accessed it.

The Australian Bureau of Statistics (ABS) was 'attacked' by Macquarie University academics to illustrate weaknesses in the TableBuilder tool used by ABS to enable low dataset counts to be retrieved. TableBuilder creates tables, graphs and maps of Australian census data. As the tool could be manipulated through unlimited query counts to include cell counts of 1, it was theoretically possible to re-identify individuals from census data.¹⁷⁶ The ABS were made aware of the vulnerability and have consequently changed the ToolBuilder interface.

HealthEngine was the government endorsed health appointment and scheduling app recommended by the ADHA. HealthEngine was exposed for editing negative reviews of GP practices, revealing the identifying details of 75 users via a website flaw and sharing hundreds of patient's data to personal injury legal firms.¹⁷⁷ HealthEngine provided access to MHR information such as Medicare records, test results, scans and prescriptions, for their app users to view on mobile phones.¹⁷⁸

The difficulty of estimating the extent of cybersecurity breaches at state level is also raised. The state of NSW does not currently have a mandatory notifiable data breach reporting requirement, with the NSW Privacy Commissioner recommending a voluntary reporting scheme only.¹⁷⁹ As the National Data Breach scheme covers only federal government agencies and private sector organisations regulated by the Australian Privacy Principles, it is virtually impossible to determine at a national level how many data breaches have occurred in the patient record systems of state-based health services.¹⁸⁰

In a politically interesting and provocative act, the Victorian Auditor General hacked into his own health databases to expose sensitive patient information.¹⁸¹ 'Patient data in Victoria's public health system could be easily hacked in a system riddled with weaknesses. The sector is highly vulnerable to cyber-attacks but staff awareness of data security is low, with issues around physical security, password management and other access controls'.¹⁸² The official Auditor General report of Victorian security vulnerabilities states: 'There are key weaknesses in health services' physical and logical security covering password management and other user access controls. Staff awareness of data security is low, which increases the likelihood of success of social engineering techniques such as phishing or tailgating into corporate areas where ICT infrastructure and servers may be located'.¹⁸³ Also in Victoria, Cabrini Hospital based Melbourne Heart Group was unable to access approximately 15,000 files in February 2019 due to a server ransomware attack which corrupted and encrypted data. The ransom was reportedly paid: 'The My Health Record database will be an enormously tempting target for cybercriminals, not just now but for years, if not decades, to come.'¹⁸⁴

These cybersecurity breaches whether notifiable or not, highlight the need for expertly trained cybersecurity professionals within the healthcare system. At present however, across NSW and Australia, there is a significant shortfall in sufficiently skilled and experienced cybersecurity experts required to develop products and services to meet ever evolving cybersecurity threats.¹⁸⁵ A new Certificate IV in cyber security was accredited nationally and is being implemented in NSW. One of

the key aspects of the NSW Cybersecurity Strategy is the alignment of streamlined cybersecurity training with industry. The report does not specifically mention the healthcare sector as an area of need.

The idea of informed consent is contentious within MHR, in that implied consent is taken to have been granted if there has been no active opt-out of the MHR system. Several authors question the notion of ongoing consent inherent within systems such as MHR.¹⁸⁶ 'The MHR Act does not specify the types of applicants that may access MHR system data for secondary use'.¹⁸⁷ Ongoing consent for secondary use of health information and data through MHR is condoned by the ADHA. Section 66(2) of the Framework¹⁸⁸ specifically enables 'secondary use of identified MHR data, noting that the System Operator (ADHA) is authorised to collect, use and disclose an individual's health care information (i.e. identifiable information) with the consent of the individual'.¹⁸⁹ How and when this consent is obtained, and by whom is not elucidated. The concept of ongoing consent as a breach of trust was raised when the Department of Human Services (DHS) acted on behalf of a third-party research organisation to access Medicare prescription data and contact (via letter) 50,000 Australians who had been prescribed Lithium.¹⁹⁰ DHS claims that researchers had no access to private patient information disregards the point that an open access letter did contain private and potentially damaging information, as well as avoiding the issue that consent to share private prescription data had not been sought from any of the people contacted. How was consent obtained for secondary use in this case?

Health management training in Australia

Health management courses in Australia (such as Masters in Health Management) are a prerequisite for health manager jobs, yet these do not usually cover cybersecurity in their curricula. We did not identify any Masters level degree in health or hospital management which teaches cybersecurity. The Australasian College of Health Service Management (ACHSM) Guideline for Universities (2017) lists the five core competencies required of health service managers including the requisite knowledge, skills and behaviours expected of graduates. Cybersecurity (risk awareness, assessment, mitigation or management) is not listed. Nor is it mentioned by RACMA, the other peak body for health management.

Discussion

The healthcare sector is a complex system of interconnected organisations, providers, staff and patients, of which MHR is an important component. As highlighted throughout, human factors play a crucial role in cybersecurity with employees often the weakest link in organizational cybersecurity.¹⁹¹ However, lack of mandatory reporting of breaches, lack of health management training in cybersecurity, lack of investment in cybersecurity infrastructure in health systems and use of old, legacy computing systems by hospitals, leaves Australia vulnerable to cyber-attacks. The potential advantages of a centralised and accessible patient health record are clear, but the cybersecurity issues inherent in collating, transferring and storing electronic patient records and health information must be comprehensively addressed. The Privacy Act 1988 protects the personal information of Australians in federal agencies or private organisations but does not cover state and territory public hospitals or health services. The OAIC Notifiable Data Breach Scheme (NDBS) has the legislative power under the Privacy Act IIIC to enforce penalties for data breaches. As of February 2018, no fines have been issued despite 967 reported breaches that have affected tens of thousands of Australians. This is in stark contrast to HIPAA in the US which accredits health care organisations to enforce cybersecurity and data protection compliance, and which issues penalties of between 50,000 USD to 1.5 USD million US for noncompliance. HIPAA was amended in 2005 to protect the electronic protected health information stored, collected or transferred by any healthcare provider. Even with the protections of HIPAA, the US has suffered ransomware attacks on hospitals and other health data

breaches. Without any such protection, Australia would be even more vulnerable, and should consider adopting a data protection scheme and framework that includes a critical analysis of the capability of multiple health providers and organisations with disparate operating systems to ensure health data security, confidentiality and integrity. Mandatory reporting of breaches should also be adopted. Cybersecurity capability must integrate all aspects of information security measures to protect health information from malicious access or breach.¹⁹² Currently this provision does not exist within Australia. Health budgets should include resources to upgrade computer systems and hire cybersecurity personnel.

Data breaches adversely affect patient and community faith in healthcare to protect privacy and can lead to health information being withheld from healthcare providers due to confidentiality concerns.¹⁹³ Non-disclosure of information could lead to inaccurate or delayed diagnoses and compromised patient safety. However, it is essential that allaying security and privacy concerns and protecting provider reputation not become motivation to withhold cybersecurity breach reporting. Mandatory reporting and open discussion of cybersecurity incidents and breaches can facilitate real world learning and become the basis for education and training programmes. Cybersecurity capability is the capacity to manage previously unknown and seen situations and is best developed through multiple experiences of dealing with new situations.¹⁹⁴

There are significant concerns regarding the ethics and consent in MHR. The rights of the patient regarding information collected about them, especially when considering 'ongoing consent' for secondary research sharing and use are paramount.¹⁹⁵ It could be argued that the least influential and most vulnerable people are being co-opted into MHR by an opt-out system, without their informed consent, further cementing health inequity and disparity. The Government has not fully addressed access and consent issues relating to many vulnerable communities including adolescents, abuse victims, sex workers, people with HIV and those with mental illnesses.¹⁹⁶ MHR raises the concept of a social licence not only for the open disclosure of potential cybersecurity risks, but also regarding the secondary use of health record data for research.¹⁹⁷ Consumers are entitled to control how their data are used, but this must be balanced to ensure that informed consent can be obtained to enable high quality primary and public health research.

It is impossible to completely mitigate cyber threats: 'Today it has become a question of "when", and "at what level"' systems such as MHR will be breached. This does not invalidate the need for comprehensive, integrated and accessible electronic health records such as MHR. Instead it indicates the need for open disclosure of and proactive dialogue about cyber-attacks, innovate and holistic strategies and policies to reduce cyber threat, and cyber education and training for all health staff in order to develop cybersecurity awareness and capability. A healthcare culture that shares risk and threat information¹⁹⁹ is as essential as infrastructure management such as replacing legacy software and hardware, patching and updates and undertaking comprehensive risk assessments of connected devices.²⁰⁰

The overall cybersecurity maturity of healthcare organisations should be assessed to ensure a secure healthcare environment of interconnected systems.²⁰¹ The multiple health providers, organisations and agencies combining information into a comprehensive electronic health record provide innumerable potential attack interfaces. Cybersecurity threats are emerging from new vectors. Healthcare is also vulnerable from rapidly evolving technologies including wireless sensor networked medical devices, healthcare applications, and implantable medical devices. 'Enhancing the security and privacy in MCPS remains a serious challenge demanding careful considerations and joint efforts by the industry, the health systems, and the research community'.²⁰²

Limitations

There are three main limitations to this systematic review. The first is that the cybersecurity landscape is evolving at such an exponential rate, that new information is emerging regularly. The second is that as

this is such an emerging field, the number of scholarly research articles published on this topic is sparse. Third, the scope of this review was broad and some themes were not able to be considered in detail.

Conclusion

This review investigates the body of literature on global cyberattacks against the healthcare sector, in order to categorise the cyber threats to health, and present mitigating countermeasures or protective strategies in relation to a universal electronic health record in Australia. Cyberattacks against healthcare are rising due to the lucrative patient data available in digitalised health systems, and because healthcare has poor cybersecurity defences and awareness. Australia lacks some of the protections that other countries such as the US has, such as the HIPAA law and mandatory reporting of breaches. Outdated health computing systems and lack of investment by the hospital sector in cybersecurity is an additional problem. Health management training lacks cybersecurity content, and until this is addressed, the health system will remain vulnerable. If healthcare managers are not taught essential cybersecurity skills, it is unlikely they will lead change in the development of healthcare cybersecurity capability and resilience in the workplace. There is no way to completely mitigate the risk of a cybersecurity incident or breach within the healthcare system, globally or within Australia. However, building a proactive healthcare culture of cybersecurity maturity can help to reduce cybersecurity risk.

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Disclosure statement

No potential conflict of interest was reported by the authors.

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