E-script software needs debugging

BYRON KAYE

DOCTORS, pharmacists and software makers have written to the department of health demanding it fix a discrepancy in the prescribing part of the e-health system which could lead to patients getting the wrong medication.

The letter from the AMA, Pharmacy Guild and others said naming guidelines given to e-health software makers had changed the convention of listing the biggest ingredient first to alphabetising them instead.

A GP who prescribed Coveram 5mg/10mg, for example, would expect the patient to get 5mg of perindopril and 10mg of amlodipine. However, those proportions would be swapped by the pharmacist's software because amlodipine came first alphabetically, the letter warned.

Other examples include Daivobet (calcipotriol/betamethasone), Prednefrin Forte Eye Drops (phenylephrine/prednisolone) and Panadeine Forte (paracetamol/codeine).

"The changes already implemented have caused significant confusion and consternation with healthcare professionals and increases the safety risks to consumers from potential supply errors," the letter said.

National E-Health Transition Authority clinical lead Dr Mukesh Haikerwal said while no serious adverse effects were known, "the risk is that rigour required of the system may be absent and therefore there will be a loss of confidence".

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