SA Govt’s new patient admin system still an issue for Surgeons

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SA Health’s planned Enterprise Patient Administration System (EPAS) due to be rolled out in the new Royal Adelaide Hospital still has a long way to go before it becomes operational according to the Royal Australasian College of Surgeons (RACS).

This follows recent comments to the media by SA Health CEO, Mr David Swan, expressing confidence that EPAS would be operational in time for the opening of the new Royal Adelaide Hospital.

EPAS is expected to provide the foundation for delivering South Australia’s state-wide electronic health record (EHR).

RACS SA Regional Chair Dr Sonja Latzel said the feedback she had received was not so positive.

“Mr Swan’s comments contradict what surgeons are telling us,” Dr Latzel said.

“We regularly consult our Fellows to gauge their views, and the feedback we are consistently hearing about EPAS is that it is still a very difficult system to work with.

“The government’s desire to move towards an electronic based system is understandable and we support this principle, but at the same time it would be disastrous to rollout a patient administration system without the appropriate level of functionality,” the RACS SA Chair said.

Dr Latzel said that some of the main concerns she had received, included issues surrounding patient privacy, and an overly inflexible system that on many occasions had prevented doctors from prescribing essential medications to their patients.

“As medical professionals our jobs come with a high degree of pressure - that is just the nature of our work - we all accept this and we all manage it as best we can.

“But when that pressure is needlessly exacerbated by a flawed system, then this is obviously something that needs to be addressed, particularly when the intention is to roll this out so soon and on such a large scale.

“We agree that there will always be teething problems with an undertaking of this magnitude, but from our perspective these are more than just teething problems.

“We would love to see a fully functioning EPAS in place when the new hospital opens, but the main priority has to be the safety of staff and patients.

“The reality is that at the moment we don’t feel like we can guarantee this with any sort of confidence,” Dr Latzel said.

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