

POLAR Transition

Frequently asked questions

Q. What is POLAR?

POLAR (Population Level Analysis and Reporting) is a cloud-based data extraction tool for general practice. POLAR securely extracts data from practice software which can be used to support quality improvement and business development, with the goal of providing better patient-centred care.

Q. Who is Outcome Health?

Outcome Health is the owner and developer of POLAR. Based in Melbourne, Outcome Health provides a range of data intelligence and clinical services, supporting thousands of Australia's general practices to improve patient outcomes. CHN has partnered with Outcome Health to provide POLAR to general practices in the ACT.

Q. Who is eligible for POLAR?

General practices within the ACT are eligible for a subsidised POLAR license through CHN. An agreement to provide de-identified practice data to CHN is required for the use of the POLAR tool.

Q: Who can use POLAR?

POLAR is suitable for general practice staff who work clinically, have business oversight or use data for accreditation purposes. Access to POLAR can be determined by the practice's assigned POLAR Administrator and can include Practice Principals, GPs, Nurses, Practice Managers, Business Managers and Receptionists.

Q: Do I need to pay for POLAR?

There is no direct cost to the practice. POLAR is fully subsidised by CHN and there will be no ongoing product costs. An agreement to provide de-identified practice data to CHN is required for the use of the tool.

Q: How does POLAR manage my data?

The POLAR data extraction tool automatically extracts patient data from the general practice clinical information software and practice management software. The practice data is encrypted using industry endorsed algorithms similar to those used in the banking sector. The encrypted identified data is stored locally within the practice with the POLAR software. At no point does any identified patient data leave your practice. The encrypted de-identified data is then uploaded directly to the POLAR data warehouse (located in Australia). CHN can access the de-identified aggregated practice data through a secure web portal. Please refer to [Data Privacy and Security](#) for more details of Outcome Health data management.

Q: How does CHN manage my data?

De-identified aggregated practice data is stored securely in the POLAR platform and is not for distribution. CHN has oversight of this de-identified data and uses this information to improve population health planning and provide better patient outcomes across the ACT. This includes:

- population health planning;
- quality improvement activities with practices;
- health service planning;
- identification of service gaps;
- improvement of community health promotion and prevention activities;
- authorised research with appropriate Human Research Ethics Committee approval; and
- supporting the commissioning of local services.

CHN complies with all applicable laws in relation to data privacy and security during collection, storage, access, use, disclosure or transmission of the de-identified Data (including, where applicable, Privacy Laws). CHN will not attempt to identify or re-identify any de-identified data received from the practice. CHN will not release practice level data to any other party without the written consent of the practice.

For more information about how CHN uses data and how this data is managed, consult your data sharing agreement, or speak with our team by emailing primarycare@chnact.org.au or phoning 02 6287 8026.

Q: Why has CHN decided to make the change?

CHN is moving to Outcome Health's POLAR data extraction tool to better support practices in understanding their patient cohort. It will provide meaningful analysis to identify gaps in patient care, track patient outcomes, build on areas of quality improvement and identify opportunities to improve practice revenue.

Q: When will the transition start?

CHN and Outcome Health are working with practices to transition to POLAR before 30 June 2025. Please contact our Quality Improvement team if you have not received the transition instructions or need more information.

Q: What are the steps of POLAR installation?

Step 1: Your practice will need to sign a new data sharing agreement with CHN.

Step 2: Once the agreement is signed, the CHN QI Team will create a practice profile for you in POLAR and will contact you to arrange a time for remote installation.

- Your practice needs to nominate a POLAR authoriser and administrator. Your authorised person and nominated administrator can be the same person and should be the Practice Manager, Practice Owner or similar (only admin users have access to your practice's financial information in MBS reports)
- The POLAR Administrator can setup and manage your POLAR user accounts for any staff member and allow or restrict access to revenue information in individual reports

Step 3: Once you have booked an installation time Outcome Health will be in contact to confirm the installation time and instructions on what to prepare for the installation.

POLAR is only installed onto one server or computer within the general practice or cloud environment. It takes about 30-60 minutes to install including the first full data extraction

Q: My practice has a lot of workstations, will the POLAR installation process be time-consuming?

A single installation at your practice allows you to use POLAR on any PC within the same network regardless of the size of your practice.

Q: Can I keep both PenCS and POLAR clinical audit tools at the same time?

Yes, both clinical audit tools can be kept at the same time. However, CHN will only subsidise POLAR, and your PenCS license will be deactivated from 30 June 2025.

If you would prefer to keep PenCS, you will need to pay for the PenCS license yourself.

Q: When will the last data submission be for PenCS and what will happen with my PIP QI data during the transition process?

The last deidentified data submission with PenCS to CHN will be in June 2025. CHN is working to have all practices onboarded with POLAR prior to this and data will be submitted to both platforms ensuring there is no disruption to PIP QI data upload during the transition. CHN will work with all practices to ensure we receive your PIP QI data and you remain compliant for the quarter.

Q: Will it impact PIP QI payment if I do not have POLAR installed?

According to the Department of Health and Aged Care, a general practice may submit their Population Health Data Set via PenCS or POLAR depending on the PHN's chosen extraction tool.

From 1 July 2025, POLAR will be the data extraction tool provided by CHN to submit your de-identified dataset to meet the above requirement of getting PIP QI payment. If you do not have POLAR installed by 30 June 2025, you will need to discuss with CHN an alternative method of submitting data to remain eligible for PIP QI.

Q: Will CHN subsidise Walrus?

Yes, Walrus will come with your POLAR license.

Q: Will CHN subsidise Husky?

ACT general practices using POLAR are eligible for a free 6-month trial of Husky, Outcome Health's appointment optimisation tool. Read more about Husky [here](#). To continue with Husky after the six months, practices will need to contact Outcome Health directly at [contact sales@outcomehealth.org.au](mailto:sales@outcomehealth.org.au) for more information.

Q: How do I notify our patients about their data being collected?

You must ensure your patients are reasonably informed that the information the practice has collected about them will be de-identified and shared with CHN for the purposes outlined in the question above. You must also ensure that patients are reasonably informed that they can withdraw their consent at any time.

You can inform your patients about their de-identified data being shared through new patient intake forms, practice brochures and/or waiting room posters. CHN will provide your practice with a poster to display in your waiting room. Please contact CHN for a copy of the resource if you haven't received one.

Q: How and when can my practice staff learn to use the tool?

A series of webinars will be provided for staff training. Practices will also have access to Outcome Health's extensive Knowledge Base for ongoing learning. We recommend viewing these webinars as a first step. The QI team will be able to visit practices to train staff in using the tool from July. Please note that the QI Team is expecting a high volume of requests and will make every effort to accommodate everyone as promptly as possible.

Q: Where can I go for support?

For technical issues, please contact the POLAR Support Team. Submit a ticket through your POLAR Account Portal via 'Support' > 'Contact Us' or send them an email on servicedesk@outcomehealth.org.au.

For guidance materials, troubleshooting support and Quality Improvement activities, please contact your QI Team on primarycare@chnact.org.au.