

Patients discharged without test results

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Close to half of the tests ordered by doctors on the day of a patient's discharge from hospital are not looked at again, UNSW research has found.

Professor Enrico Coiera, Director of the Centre for [Health Informatics](#) at the Australian Institute of Health Innovation at UNSW, led the study which is published today in *The [Archives of Internal Medicine](#)*.

He says some of the tests that are ordered may be unnecessary, while those that are clinically significant should be followed up.

“At the most extreme, tests that are ordered on the day a patient is discharged from hospital have the least time available for them to be looked at,” Professor Coiera says.

“We found that it is especially these tests, ordered on discharge day, where the biggest problem lies. So while the tests ordered on discharge day only accounted for about 7% of all tests ever ordered in our study, they were responsible for 47% of unread tests at the time of discharge, and 41% of unread tests two months after discharge.”

His team recommends a number of potential ways to attack the problem, with specific reference to computerised test ordering systems.

“Even a simple list of test results that have not yet been read or have not yet come in could be generated electronically to prompt clinical teams to actively manage them, both on discharge day and in the days that

follow,” he says.

Provided by University of New South Wales

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