

Pandemic offers guide to future continuity of care

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The Continuity of Care Collaboration survey has shown the range of influences affecting patient access to health care during the pandemic that should guide future improvements to health services, the Consumers Health Forum said today.

“The impact of COVID-19 revealed not only just how much patient anxiety about safety of medical services discouraged people from seeing their doctor,” the CEO of the Consumers Health Forum, Leanne Wells, said.

“It also revealed other barriers to seeing the doctor or other health providers including worries about public transport, closed health services, technological difficulties using telehealth and concerns about breaking lockdown rules. ***See infographic of survey results attached.***

“We have already seen, and welcomed, the expansion of telehealth that was triggered by the demands of the pandemic. But the response to the pandemic has helped to identify other factors influencing access to health care that could guide us towards more inclusive services that support people, particularly with chronic conditions, in reaching the right care.

“We have seen good uptake and a positive response to telehealth by consumers. However, the survey shows there are still many people avoiding medical services for a variety of reasons. We need to reassure people, particularly those with chronic conditions, of the importance of consulting their doctor about their health concerns.

“We would reinforce the message that face to face appointments are still available where they are needed, such as pathology tests and physical examinations or allied therapies that can’t be provided remotely.”

“Just as the pandemic has made Australians and our health system more responsive to consumer needs, we should now use these

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experiences as a guide to reform in areas like primary health care,” Ms Wells said.

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