



MEDIA RELEASE

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Understanding Australia's Virtual Care Needs

Health systems around the world have been looking closely at ways that virtual care could enhance the sustainability of health services, a shift accelerating as COVID-19 drives a rapid and widespread uptake of telehealth technology by consumers and health care providers.

A new project starting this month will explore how Australia can best cater for health consumers' needs as we move from telehealth toward virtual care.

This collaboration between the Consumers' Health Forum of Australia (CHF), Curtin University, Deloitte and Digital Health CRC will canvas health consumers, practitioners, providers and government to develop direction for future digital healthcare delivery in Australia, anchored in the patient experience.

Australian Secretary of Health, Professor Brendan Murphy, joins an expert panel kicking off the first project initiative this Thursday in a webinar titled *Reimagining healthcare in Australia: The role of digital in future health delivery* which will highlight key considerations around how we can best navigate the path from telehealth to virtual care.

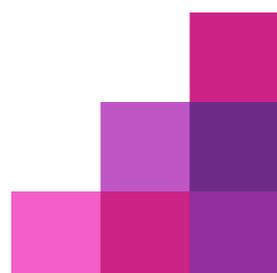
"Virtual care is a step beyond telehealth, it's more than a phone call to your doctor, it's about using a range of digital tools, whether that's proactively assessing a person's risk of illness, personalising health and wellness programs or linking with specialist call centres," said Professor Tim Shaw, who is Research Director of the Digital Health CRC.

"The gold standard is virtual care that makes health care more responsive to patient needs while also helping clinicians give the best care possible," he said.

Leanne Wells is the CEO of the Consumers' Health Forum of Australia. "Consumers often experience healthcare that is fragmented and poorly coordinated. Variation in health literacy and timely availability of services sometimes means that people can't get the care they need when they need it," she said.

She said consumers value care that is convenient, safe and accessible and want healthcare to be made easy for them. "The pandemic has seen many consumers embrace telehealth and begin to contemplate how other forms of virtual care could work for them, supplementing traditional face-to-face medicine," she said.

She added that better health outcomes and experiences of care happen, when consumers are partners in care and involved in the design of services.



“This project’s vision for how we can move from telehealth towards virtual care will begin by ensuring we understand what consumers expect of 21st century healthcare and will use those insights as the basis for all recommendations.”

Luke Baxby is the Deloitte Australia National Health Sector Leader. “Deloitte is proud to be supporting such an important project which has the potential to transform Australia’s health sector,” he said.

“We will draw upon our global network, deep technical expertise and clinical insights to help inform the best possible approach and work with the sector to design and build Australia’s new health pathways.”

Professor Suzanne Robinson is the Rural and Remote Flagship Research and Education Director for the Digital Health Co-operative Research Centre, and also Discipline Leader for Health Economics and Data Analytics at Curtin University’s School of Public Health.

“Consumers are key to successful health systems and as we see digital technology and virtual care gaining traction, we need to make sure we focus on consumers and their needs,” she said.

“This collaboration will do that with highly skilled researchers working with the consumer forum to generate evidence on consumer preferences around future digital health care,” she said.

“This project brings together key expertise that can establish a framework to guide the transition of our health system towards virtual care,” said Dr Michael Costello, interim CEO of the Digital Health CRC.

The project is the first one under a Memorandum of Understanding between CHF and the Digital Health CRC, which will see the two organisations work together to make sure that consumer’s voices are integral to new initiatives introduced across the digital health sector for the life of the CRC.

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To register for the CHF/DHCRC/Deloitte Webinar on Thu 10 Sep 9-10AM AEST go to <https://www.digitalhealthcrc.com/reimagining-healthcare-in-australia/>

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