

MEDIA RELEASE

Australian consumers asked to play key role in reimagining healthcare

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A first of its kind [national survey](#) has been launched to Australian consumers this week, garnering insights on consumer perception, uptake and barriers to using virtual health technologies, helping inform future policy and service development.

Part of a collaborative research project through the Digital Health Cooperative Research Centre (DHCRC), led by Curtin University with Deloitte and Consumer Health Forum (CHF), the survey is part of a priority area of research on virtual care, enabling consumers to provide much needed evidence and play an active role in transforming the future of healthcare.

Extending broader than assessing telehealth perceptions, the survey aims to understand consumer willingness, ability, likelihood and potential barriers for connected care – how they engage with healthcare providers and services through digital technologies, including websites, mobile applications and fitness monitors.

Professor Suzanne Robinson, Co-Director of Curtin's Health Research and Data Analytics Hub at Curtin University said this research was essential following the global COVID-19 pandemic and rapid acceleration in advances of virtual health.

“Our research to date demonstrates that realising the potential and benefits of digital health technology depends on the user and consumer acceptance. A readiness to adopt and engage with virtual health is vital to realising the benefits of this method of healthcare delivery,” Prof Robinson said.

“We believe virtual care is the next healthcare revolution, however we need consumers to play an active role in informing the next stage of development and implementation of these technologies.

“The national survey will give us with the essential data to provide these insights to policy makers and service developers, giving Australian consumers a direct say in the future of healthcare.”

Deloitte Australia's National Healthcare Leader Luke Baxby explained this research is a critical first step to design and deliver a digitally enabled health system.

“The future of health has never been more exciting, and the potential of virtual health is limitless. Through COVID the health system proved its able to respond quickly as we saw consumers and providers shift to virtual models to maintain care. Consumer perceptions and attitudes to the role of technology and data in health shifted significantly over this period,” Mr Baxby said.

"The health system must move beyond narrowly thinking about virtual health as a means to substitute face to face care models. As a system we must actively listen and involve consumers in the design of a digitally enabled health system.

In many ways the consumers are ready for digital health, but we must ensure we design a system that connects consumers to care and avoids a digital divide."

CHF CEO Leanne Wells encouraged high levels of uptake for the survey, asking Australian consumers to participate in this exciting opportunity to have their say in reimagined healthcare.

"Successful implementation of virtual health solutions depends on a well-developed understanding of consumer needs and preferences involving consultation with a wide variety of consumers, and this survey is the vehicle to ensure we have those insights," Ms Wells said.

"We do not want a health care future where care delivered virtually creates more health inequity. Poor uptake of digital health can be confounded by factors that need to be overcome, such as ease of navigation, access, digital literacy, complexity and privacy concerns.

"Involving consumers in this research who are at risk of being excluded from accessing virtual care will help stimulate better policy and promote equitable access."

Survey access: <https://chf.org.au/projects/reimagining-healthcare-national-survey>.

Some of the key research findings (published in a [Rapid Review](#) by Curtin University, Deloitte and Consumer Health Forum) to date include:

- Involving consumers in virtual health co-design who are at particular risk of digital exclusion will help promote equitable access.
- Poor uptake of virtual care can be related to a misalignment with user requirements such as access, ease of navigation, complexity and privacy concerns.
- Experts and some health systems have identified the need for 'digital health navigator' roles to support consumers and the workforce to use digital technology.
- Health system organisation affects implementation. There is little or no coordination of digital health implementation across States' and Territories' care delivery systems.
- Consistent with policy shifts to person-centred approaches, virtual health models can empower consumers, particularly in self-care activities.

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Media enquiries

Abbey Bell, DHCRC
Head of Communications
M: 0401 082 124
E: abbey.bell@dhcrc.com

Jenna Gray, Consumer Health Forum
Digital Communications Adviser
M: 0406 216 566
E: j.gray@chf.org.au