

Funding Report: Telehealth Education Project

Aim

The aim of this project was to develop and pilot evidence-informed, practice-based education modules that can be delivered within general practices to support high-quality and safe telehealth consultations as part of ongoing GP care across Australia.

Methods

We used a multi-method approach to design and pilot the education modules:

- **Learning Needs Assessment:** Conducted 17 think-aloud interviews with GP supervisors (n=9) and GP registrars (AGPT n=6; FSP n=2) to identify learning needs, preferences, and competencies required for safe, high-quality telehealth consultations.
- **Environmental Scan:** Reviewed freely available telehealth education resources for GPs published after 2022 to ensure relevance to the current context. We extracted information on learning outcomes, format, and CPD points of existing resources to contrast with GP learning needs.
- **Education Package Development:** Applied a design thinking process to develop education materials aligned with GP preferences for experiential learning. Materials were developed to be concise (session length ≤60 minutes), practice-relevant, flexible in format, and RACGP CPD compliant.
- **Iterative Refinement:** Incorporated feedback from an advisory group, academic GPs, GP24 conference participants, and six evaluation interviews (2 GP Supervisors, 2 Fellowed GPs, 1 GP Registrar, 1 Medical Education Coordinator). Written feedback from stakeholders informed final adjustments.

Results

Key findings from the project include:

- **Learning Needs Assessment:** The GPs interviewed required guidance on determining telehealth appropriateness, conducting assessments, medico-legal obligations, risk management, and integrating technology into workflows. Competencies included managing uncertainty, effective verbal communication, documentation, and negotiating care modes.
- **Environmental scan:** Forty-one existing resources were identified; these offered general guidance but limited practical decision support.
- **Education Package Development:** Developed five peer-led sessions designed for flexibility and relevance. Sessions supported reflective discussion and were adaptable for small group peer learning, supervisor/registrar “in practice” teaching, practice team learning or individual learning.
- **Refinement:** 30 GPs registered to pilot the package; 6 participated in evaluation interviews (20% response rate). Website analytics indicated >1,000 visitors, suggesting broad reach. Sessions were well received, highly adaptable, and used in varied formats. Key learnings included how mode (phone, video, in-person) can change a consultation, and the importance of adapting patient consent, identification processes, privacy checks and safety netting during phone and video consultations. Time constraints

remained a barrier to undertaking CPD, particularly outside structured teaching time. Still, GPs appreciated the ready-to-use and easy to apply materials requiring minimal preparation.

Recommendations to improve the package included: incorporating patient perspectives (completed prior to pilot); incorporating more patient stories in the first few sessions to increase engagement (completed post pilot). ensuring consistent use of language (completed post pilot); and updating the web design to enhance navigation (completed after pilot)

Implications

Despite widespread telehealth use, GPs continue to face challenges involving risk and ethical complexity. Existing resources provide high-level guidance but lack support for practical decision-making. Our studies highlighted the need for education that develops context-specific competencies through reflective practice.

The education package created in this project demonstrated feasibility and effectiveness in improving telehealth safety and quality. Its flexible design supports integration into structured teaching (e.g., GP registrar programs) and informal learning. However, time limitations suggest that future CPD initiatives should consider strategies to enable participation, such as practice-level support and protected education time. This approach offers a model for developing ready-to-use, practice-relevant education materials that can be applied broadly across general practice teams.

Future Research

Telehealth is an evolving practice. Future research may focus on the application of: telehealth by GPs in 3+ years to identify new learning needs and preferences; telehealth with other general practice team members (e.g., Practice Nurses); and in specific settings (e.g., Residential Aged Care Facilities).

Project outputs

Project Output	Title	Status
Conference workshop	The “sticky” side of Telehealth – learning through “tricky” case studies (GP24, Perth)	<i>Completed</i>
Conference presentation	Creating peer-led education modules to support telehealth in general practice (GP25, Brisbane)	<i>Completed</i>
Conference presentation	What education do GPs in Australia need to conduct high-quality, safe telehealth consultations? (International Quality and Safety in Healthcare Conference 2025, Canberra)	<i>Completed</i>
Academic Publication	Education needs of Australian GPs to support high quality, safe telehealth care: A mixed methods exploration	<i>Under review</i>
Academic Publication	Developing and Piloting a Novel Education Package to Support Telehealth Quality and Safety in General Practice	<i>Final author review</i>
Educational package and all materials	Telehealth Professional Development – Resources for Peer Group Activities in General Practice https://telehealthprofessionaldevelopment.com/	<i>Completed</i>