



RACGP

Royal Australian College of General Practitioners

# *RACGP Telehealth video consultations survey – Summary of results*

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COVID-19 has seen a significant increase in GPs providing telehealth consultations. To inform further advocacy and education in this area, the RACGP invited members to complete a short survey on their experiences of conducting telehealth consultations, particularly using video.

Between Thursday 18 June and Sunday 5 July 2020, 420 member responses were recorded.

## Summary of results:

- Most respondents reported feeling confident using technology, with 32% very confident, 40% quite confident and 21% somewhat confident.
- The results indicate that a significant number of GPs have undertaken telehealth consultations using video, with 54% reporting having used this technology at least once. However, telephone (audio-only) services remain far more popular, with 97% of respondents undertaking telehealth consultations via phone.
- Most GPs (74%) reported using video for 0–20% of telehealth consultations.
- The most common reasons given for not using video included:
  - telephone consultations are satisfactory and video would not add any benefit (25%)
  - not having the necessary hardware/software to enable video (25%)
  - patients not wanting to use video (15%).
- Most respondents (65%) indicated they would be willing to start using video for telehealth consultations if these issues were addressed.
- When asked what would need to change in order to start using video, the top answers were:
  - patient requests for video consultations (22%)
  - access to hardware/software (18%)
  - better remuneration for consulting via video (16%).
- The vast majority of GPs surveyed indicated they would continue to provide care via telehealth if the temporary COVID-19 MBS items for telehealth services are extended beyond September 2020. Nearly 50% reported they would do so via telephone, while 37% would try using video.
- 35% of GPs advised they would like to maintain a similar rate of consultations via telehealth (video and phone) if this model of care is continued post-September, 27% would like to revert to primarily consulting face-to-face, while 18% would like to use telehealth for regular patients of the practice.
- The most common types of consultations undertaken via video are standard consultations, follow-up consultations, prescriptions and referrals, and mental health.
- Of the telehealth consultations conducted using video, the most common age group of patients was 35–44, followed by 25–34. The age group least likely to be seen via telehealth was <18 without a parent/guardian present.
- Significant numbers of patients have requested a telehealth consultation (either via video or audio-only) in the past month, with 25% of GPs surveyed reporting that 21–40% of their patients have requested a telehealth consultation, 22% reporting 41–60% of their patients have requested a telehealth consultation, and 21% reporting 61–80% of their patients have requested a telehealth consultation.
- 33% of GPs reported that their use of video consultations has remained consistent since they first started offering telehealth consultations using video. 21% reported that their use of video has slightly increased, while for 18% their use of video significantly decreased.
- GPs who have chosen to use video rather than audio-only services reported that it helps them to assess the patient (26%), they find video to be more personal (19%), and it helps them to undertake a physical examination of the patient (18%).
- A range of platforms are used by GPs to undertake video consultations, including widely available options such as FaceTime, Zoom and Skype.
- The most common devices used to conduct video consultations are a personal mobile device, practice computer and personal computer.
- Most GPs surveyed (64%) reported they have not received any support or training to provide telehealth services in their practice.
- For those who had received training, the most common providers of this were the practice, other and practice managers.