

Views and attitudes towards technological innovation in general practice

Survey report



Views and attitudes towards technological innovation in general practice: Survey report

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We recognise the traditional custodians of the land and sea on which we work and live.

About the RACGP Expert Committee

eHealth and Practice Systems

The RACGP Expert Committee – eHealth and Practice Systems (REC–eHPS) supports the provision of healthcare through technology by providing general practice with guidance and resources that improve practice and communication efficiencies. The committee's advocacy work has ensured that elements of eHealth are reasonable, workable and useful for general practice.



Additional PDF copies of this report can be downloaded from
www.racgp.org.au/your-practice/ehealth

About this survey

Advances in information and communications technology have transformed healthcare delivery by creating more effective and efficient ways to connect patients, clinicians and providers. Similar to the changes experienced in other settings, healthcare has made remarkable progress in the way it captures patient, clinical, research and administrative data.

Despite its potential for improving communications and workflow, the pace of technology adoption within the Australian healthcare industry has been slow compared to other industries. It is in this environment that the RACGP engaged in a consultation with general practitioners (GPs) to explore their views and attitudes on the use of technology in their practice. The RACGP distributed an online survey to GPs across Australia. A total of 253 GPs participated in the survey, with 185 responses considered for analysis.

The survey indicates that GPs are optimistic about the use of eHealth technology and its ability to improve productivity and care coordination. Recent graduates (73%), followed by GPs practising for 10 years or more (67%), feel most comfortable about experimenting with emerging technologies.

Information technology (IT) systems and practice processes, and issues related to patient confidentiality and privacy were the main barriers to GPs' eHealth adoption. Learning and development activities were the main facilitators.

In order to increase uptake of mobile technologies, general practice requires guidance on how to address the barriers related to systems integration. Additionally, GPs need support to understand the benefits mobile technologies can bring to clinical practice and workflow.

We thank all participants for taking part in the survey and welcome further feedback and comments to ehealth@racgp.org.au. The RACGP hopes the results provide a stimulus to discuss increased adoption of digital technologies in general practice while achieving the best health outcomes for patients.



Dr Nathan Pinski
Chair
RACGP Expert Committee – eHealth and Practice Systems

Survey design

This exploratory survey aimed to understand the use of eHealth technologies by GPs. Specifically, the survey explored:

- knowledge of eHealth technologies
- experience using eHealth technologies in patient-related work
- barriers and facilitators for the adoption of eHealth technologies
- education and training needs.

Methods

A 10-minute online survey using a descriptive, quantitative design was developed based on existing literature and refined by pilot testing with members of the REC-eHPS to verify content validity. For the purpose of the survey, the REC-eHPS investigated:

- types of eHealth technologies of which GPs are aware
- technologies currently being used, and future interest
- perceived barriers and facilitators
- learning and development opportunities.

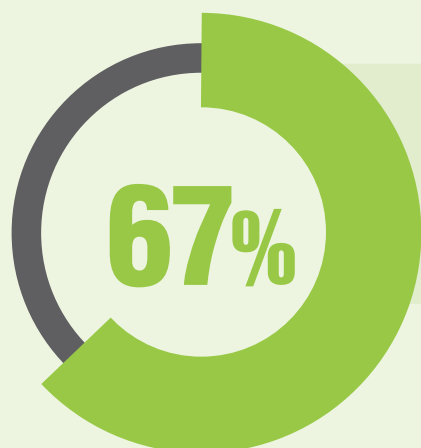
The survey was initially advertised at the RACGP's 2015 Conference for

General Practice – GP15, followed by a social media campaign (using Twitter, Facebook and LinkedIn), and via the RACGP's member newsletter. Participants were invited through key organisations that promoted the online survey link among their members, including peak professional bodies, Primary Health Networks (PHNs) and universities. Quantitative data were analysed using Microsoft Excel, and themes from open-ended questions were described.

This exploratory survey aimed to understand the use of eHealth technologies by GPs

2015 RACGP Use of technology survey

GPs welcome the use of technology in healthcare



are satisfied with the way they use technology in patient-orientated work

Highest rates of satisfaction



42%

major cities



49%

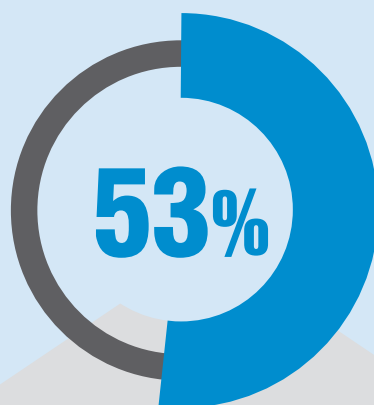
GPs with 10 or more years of practice

GPs experimenting with new technologies



80%

rise in GP confidence to use mobile devices over the past five years



feel confident about experimenting with new technologies



41%

recommend mHealth apps to patients and they expect to increase recommendations in the future

confident
comfortable with new technologies

not confident
need more direction with new technologies

73%

recent grads



GPs 3–5 years



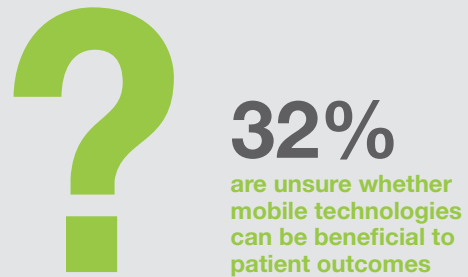
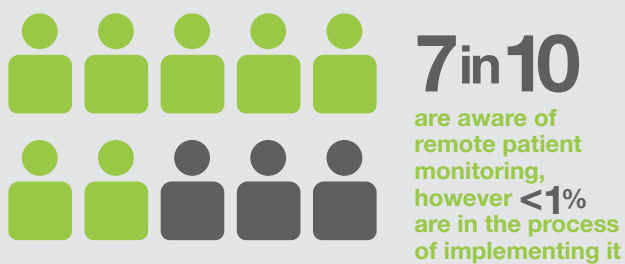
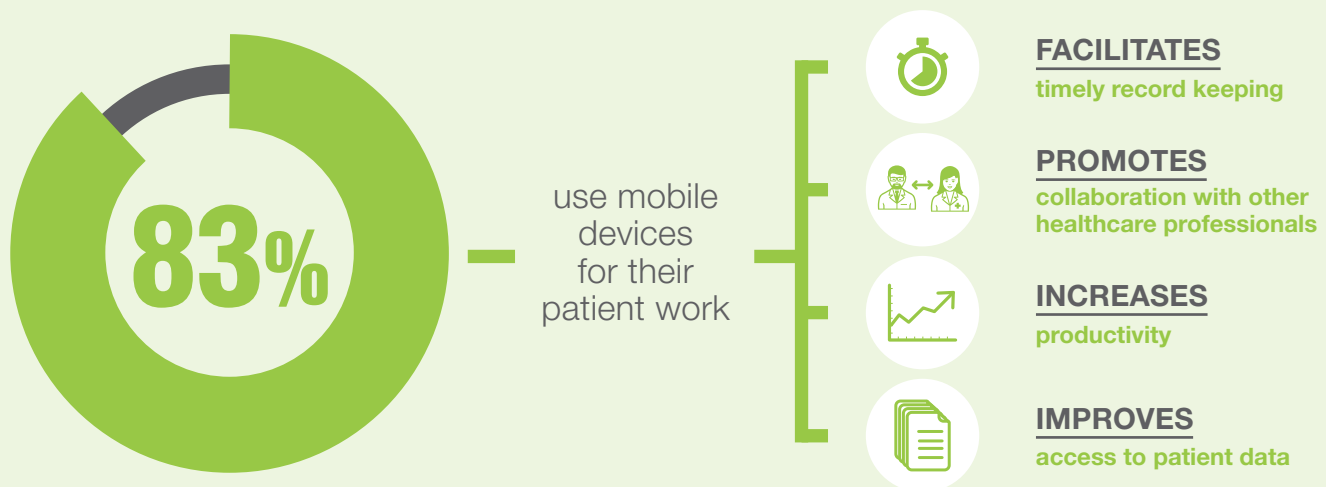
41%

67%

GPs 10+ years



GPs views of mobile technologies



INFORMATION GPs WOULD LIKE TO ACCESS FROM THEIR MOBILE DEVICES



Technology adoption

ENABLERS	BARRIERS
professional development	lack of integration with IT systems
participation in conferences and seminars	lack of integration with existing practice processes
role modelling from practice manager	limited support on how to use technology
knowledge sharing with colleagues	issues related to patient confidentiality and privacy
availability of technology in the practice	lack of eHealth leadership in the practice

Communicating with patients



59%

communicate with patients
via phone



32%

communicate with patients
via email



19%

communicate with patients
via SMS

Implications for policy and practice

- GPs are optimistic about the use of eHealth technologies and about their prospects for improving productivity and coordination of care.
- In order to increase uptake of mobile technologies, general practice requires guidance on how to address the barriers related to systems integration. Additionally, GPs need support to understand the benefits mobile technologies can bring to clinical practice and workflow.
- It is important to engage in an ongoing dialogue with GPs to explore their knowledge and attitudes in relation to eHealth technologies, so that policies support GPs to embrace and integrate technology in their practice.

Next steps

The RACGP will conduct this survey annually to ensure policies and activities address development needs across different areas of eHealth in general practice.

RACGP eHealth resources

[Digital Business Kits \(DBK\)](#) – provide a suite of resources and general guidance to promote the adoption and meaningful use of technologies in general practice.

[Guide for the use of social media in general practice](#) – provides information on social media advantages and disadvantages, risks and benefits, online conduct, security, privacy requirements, advertising and testimonials, and the use of disclaimers.

[A guide for hardware and software requirements in general practice](#) – assists general practices in choosing what type of IT requirements they need for their business.



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