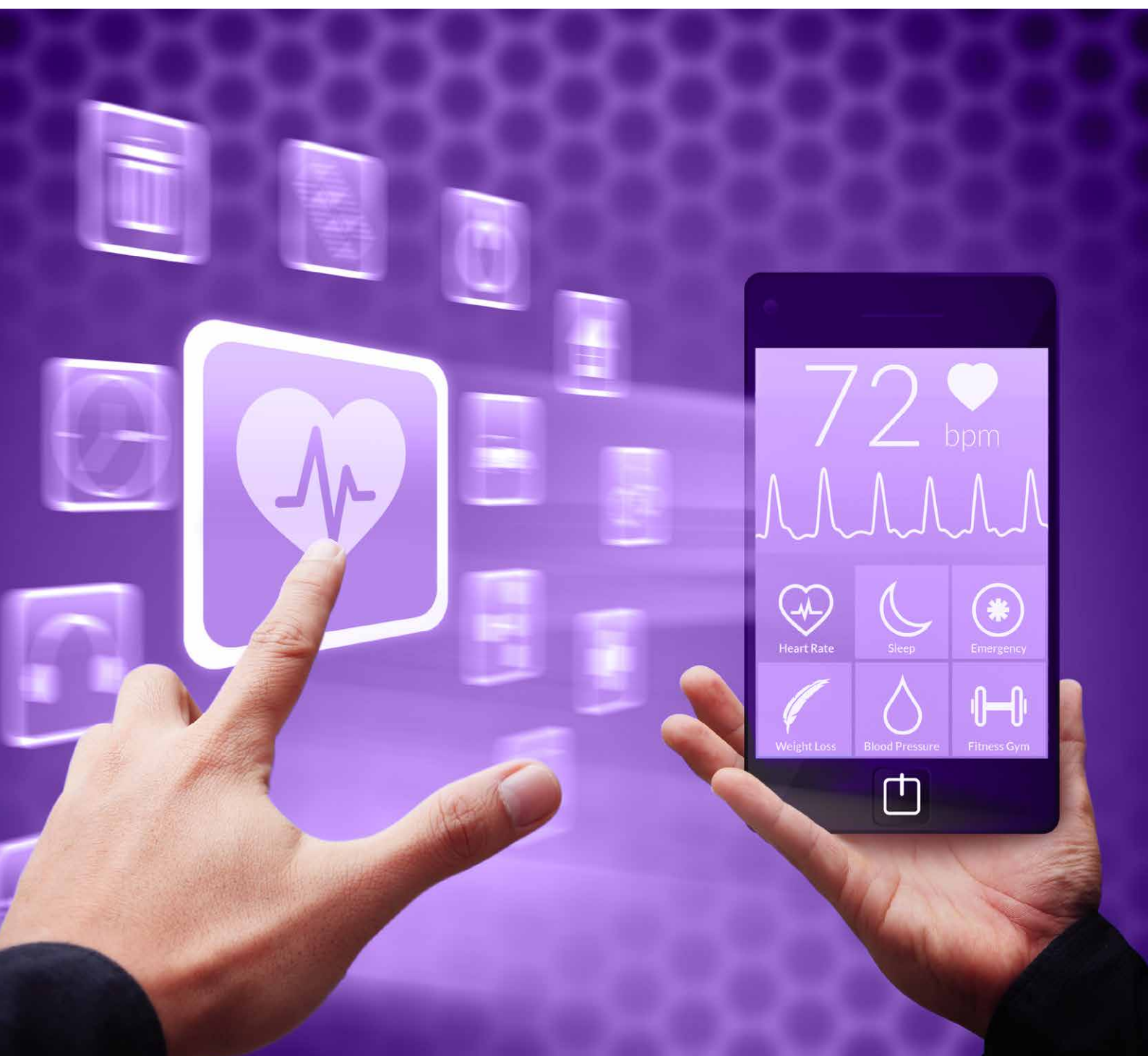


Views and attitudes towards technological innovation in general practice

Survey report 2018



Views and attitudes towards technological innovation in general practice: Survey report 2018

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We acknowledge the Traditional Custodians of the lands and seas on which we work and live, and pay our respects to Elders, past, present and future.

About the RACGP Expert Committee – Practice Technology and Management

The RACGP Expert Committee – Practice Technology and Management (REC–PTM) oversees and supports a program of work relating to eHealth developments, information and practice management, and addresses issues that impact the current and future operation of Australian general practice. Technology is constantly evolving, and the committee has a flexible, dynamic and responsive approach to the changing eHealth environment in Australia.

Work of the REC–PTM includes:

- developing business tools and resources to support the use of eHealth technologies in general practice
- advocacy to ensure that elements of eHealth are reasonable, workable and useful for general practice
- advising the RACGP Board and collaborating with external bodies to develop and promote eHealth standards in general practice
- developing RACGP position statements on key external eHealth initiatives.

About this survey

The RACGP first launched the annual RACGP Technology Survey in 2015 to gain insights and opinions on the use of technology among general practitioners (GPs) in Australia. Member responses continue to assist the RACGP and the REC-PTM in understanding what systems are being used, where future investment is needed and the key technology challenges faced by general practice teams.

In October, the RACGP opened the 2018 survey. A 15-minute online survey was distributed to GPs across Australia. In total, 1762 GPs participated in the survey, and 1220 responses were considered for analysis. It is acknowledged that since this is an online survey, results may be skewed towards GPs with higher IT literacy.

Year-on-year survey results have indicated these GPs remain optimistic about the use of eHealth technologies and their ability to improve productivity and care coordination. Eighty-seven per cent of GP respondents are now entirely digital, with no supplementary paper records held, and there have been increases since 2017 in the adoption of some eHealth technologies into daily workflows.

Use and integration of technology in general practice has, as in all medical fields and in our world more generally, experienced a surge over previous decades. eHealth technologies now allow us to connect with patients using non-traditional methods, providing patient choice and positive user experiences. GPs report that technology has led to improved practice efficiencies and more effective collaboration with other healthcare providers, resulting in improved continuity of care and better patient outcomes.

The RACGP will continue its work in removing identified barriers preventing some GPs and general practices from adopting, and feeling confident using, eHealth technologies. This includes continued advocacy to drive secure electronic communication adoption by the wider healthcare community, resulting in improved communication between healthcare providers. We will deliver further eHealth education both face to face and via webinar, and will be delivering a suite of learning packages, accessible to GPs and practice staff, on a number of eHealth topics.

Thank you to all members who completed this survey. Your time is greatly appreciated. I would like our members and their practice teams to contact us freely with issues or queries they may have regarding technology in general practice, and we welcome further feedback. Please email ehealth@racgp.org.au at any time.



Dr Rob Hosking
Chair, RACGP Expert Committee – Practice Technology and Management

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 drivers for the adoption of eHealth technologies
- education and training needs.

Methods

This survey used a descriptive, quantitative design. A 15-minute online survey was developed based on existing literature and refined by pilot testing to verify content validity. Testing was conducted with members of the RACGP Expert Committee – eHealth and Practice Systems (REC–eHPS). The REC–eHPS transitioned to the REC–PTM in October 2018, with new committee members inducted. For the purpose of tracking trends since the inception of the annual survey in 2015, a number of questions have been replicated from previous years.

The survey was launched at the RACGP's 2018 conference for general practice (GP18) on the Gold Coast, and was supported by a communications strategy including:

- an RACGP member email campaign
- promotion via the *RACGP Practice Technology and Management* newsletter
- during RACGP 'My Health Record in general practice' education events (webinars and workshops)
- a social media campaign.

Quantitative data were analysed using the Qualtrix platform, and themes from open-ended questions were described.

Summary of findings

- Eighty-seven per cent of GP respondents are now entirely digital, with no supplementary paper records maintained.
- Seventy-one per cent of GPs were satisfied with the way they use technology in their practice, with the highest rate of satisfaction among GPs with 5–10 years' experience.
- Fifty per cent of GPs feel confident about experimenting with new technologies. There is an inverse correlation between age and confidence in experimenting with new technologies.
- Fifty per cent of GPs send and receive clinical information via secure electronic communication.
- GPs with 1–5 years' experience are the biggest users of mobile devices in their practice at 49%, while GPs with less than one year's experience are the smallest users at 30%.
- Thirty-eight per cent of GPs **not** using mobile devices report that they do not see how mobile technology can benefit their day-to-day practice.
- In 2018, there was an increase in the number of GPs recommending apps to patients, which rose from 40% to 60% of GPs. Twenty-six per cent of GPs rarely or never recommend apps to patients. This is down from 47% in 2017. Mental health, nutrition, fitness, family planning and smoking cessation apps are the most commonly recommended.
- The main barriers identified to recommending apps were a lack of knowledge around effective apps, lack of a trustworthy source to access effective apps, lack of patient digital literacy and lack of integration into clinical software and workflows.
- Thirty-one per cent of GPs use telehealth services to provide support to patients during a video consultation, conduct video consultations with other healthcare providers and/or undertake training. Were future funding available, 48% of GPs who do not use telehealth services currently said they would be likely to commence using them in the next three years.
- GP use of social media remains consistent from 2017, with one in four GPs using a social media platform for work purposes.
- Barriers to use of social media for work purposes include medico-legal and privacy concerns.
- Forty-one per cent of GPs participated in eHealth professional development within the last 12 months. The most used platform for eHealth professional development was webinar, and the most cited eHealth professional development topic was My Health Record.*
- Seventy-three per cent of GP respondents work in practices uploading patient information to My Health Record. However, 54% do not feel adequately prepared to manage the impacts of the expansion, via an opt-out model, of My Health Record in their practice.

*It is acknowledged that since this survey was advertised at a number of RACGP 'My Health Record in general practice' education events, this result may be skewed.

Implications for policy and practice

The 2018 survey results demonstrate that GPs continue to remain optimistic about the use of eHealth technologies and their role in improving productivity and care coordination.

The RACGP will continue to engage in an ongoing dialogue with members of the general practice community to explore their knowledge and attitudes in relation to eHealth technologies, so that guidelines and policies can be developed to support GPs to safely and confidently integrate technology into their practice.

RACGP eHealth resources

The following resources have been developed by the RACGP to support GP use of technology in general practice.

- [Factsheet: Health apps](#) – information on what to consider when discussing health apps with patients.
- [mHealth in general practice: A toolkit for effective and secure use of mobile technology](#) – information and instructions for anyone considering incorporating mobile technology into general practice.
- [Guide for the use of social media in general practice](#) – information on social media advantages and disadvantages, risks and benefits, online conduct, security, privacy requirements, advertising and testimonials and the use of disclaimers.
- [Using email in general practice](#) – suite of resources that outlines the guiding principles on using email in general practice, and includes a matrix to help practices determine the level of privacy and security required in order to use email for communication.
- [Information security in general practice](#) – resource that details and recommends essential business practices, policies and procedures to help protect general practice information systems.
- [My Health Record: A brief guide for general practice](#) – provides easily accessible information to general practice staff, including what My Health Record is, the information it may contain, access controls, and medico-legal information.

Additional eHealth and practice management resources are available on the RACGP [Running a practice](#) web page.

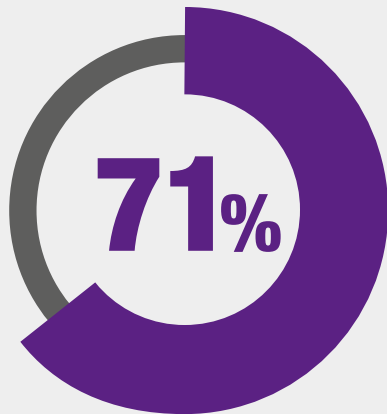
Summary of findings



87%

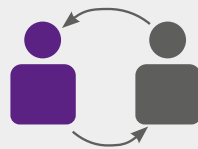
of GPs are completely digital and maintain no paper records

GP satisfaction with use of technology



of GPs were satisfied with the way they use technology in their practice, compared with 80% in 2017

GPs believe eHealth helps to improve:



Collaboration with other healthcare providers



Continuity of care



Practice efficiency



73%

GPs with 5–10 years' experience report the highest rates of satisfaction in their use of technology

Confidence experimenting with technology



60%



GPs <35 years of age



43%

GPs >65 years of age

Most confident
in experimenting with new technologies

Least confident
in experimenting with new technologies

of GPs feel confident about experimenting with new technologies

Secure electronic communication



50%

of GPs send and receive clinical information via secure electronic communication



30%

of GPs receive but do not send clinical information via secure electronic communication



2%

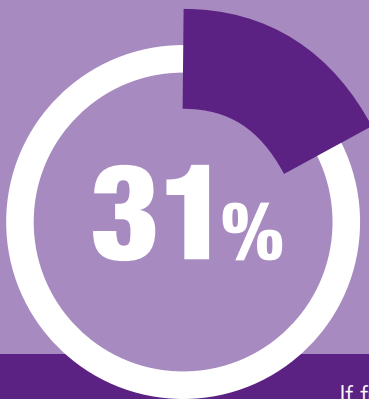
of GPs send but do not receive clinical information via secure electronic communication



18%

of GPs do not use, or are unsure about their use of, secure electronic communication

Using telehealth services



of GPs use telehealth services to:



Provide support to patients during a video consultation



Undertake training



Conduct video consultation with other healthcare providers

If funding were available, **48%** of GPs who do not currently use telehealth, would be extremely likely, or likely, to commence using it within the next three years

GP use of social media



1 in 4

GPs use social media for work purpose



Our practice uses Facebook to provide patient updates on important health checks and flu season, etc



I use social media to connect with and learn from other GPs in closed online groups

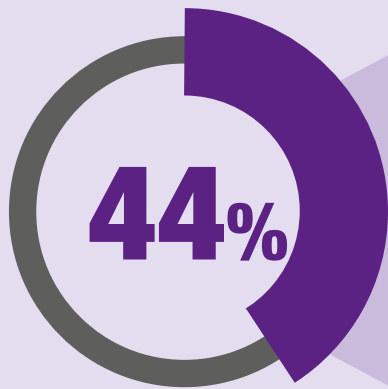


We do not use social media at present due to medico-legal and privacy concerns



Social media policies and advertising restrictions require a lot of staff time, money and expertise that we don't have

Use of mobile devices



of GPs use mobile devices (smartphones/tablets) in patient-related work, compared to 50% in 2017



49%

of GPs with 1–5 years of practice experience use mobile devices, making them the largest user group

30%

of GPs who have <1 year of practice experience use mobile devices, making them the smallest user group

GPs are using their mobile devices for:



Drug reference



Clinical test results



Electronic medical records

GPs use technology to communicate with their patients by:



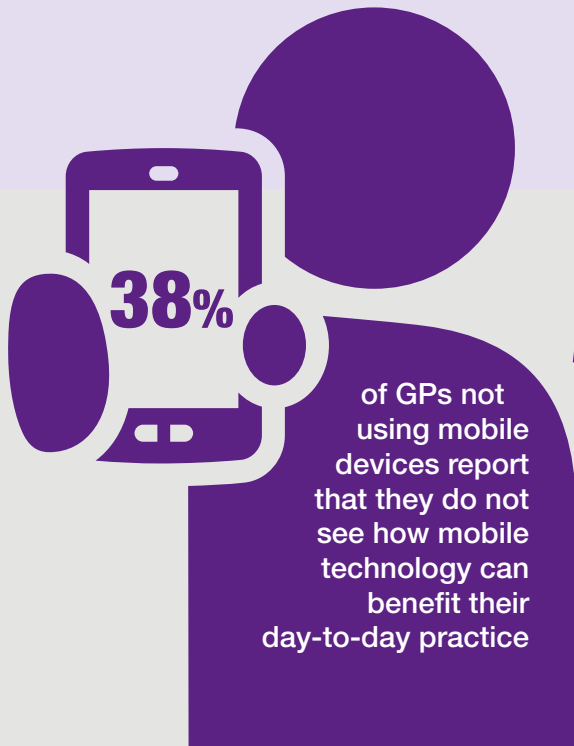
Texting reminders for appointments



Providing forms and general information on the practice website



Using standard email



of GPs not using mobile devices report that they do not see how mobile technology can benefit their day-to-day practice



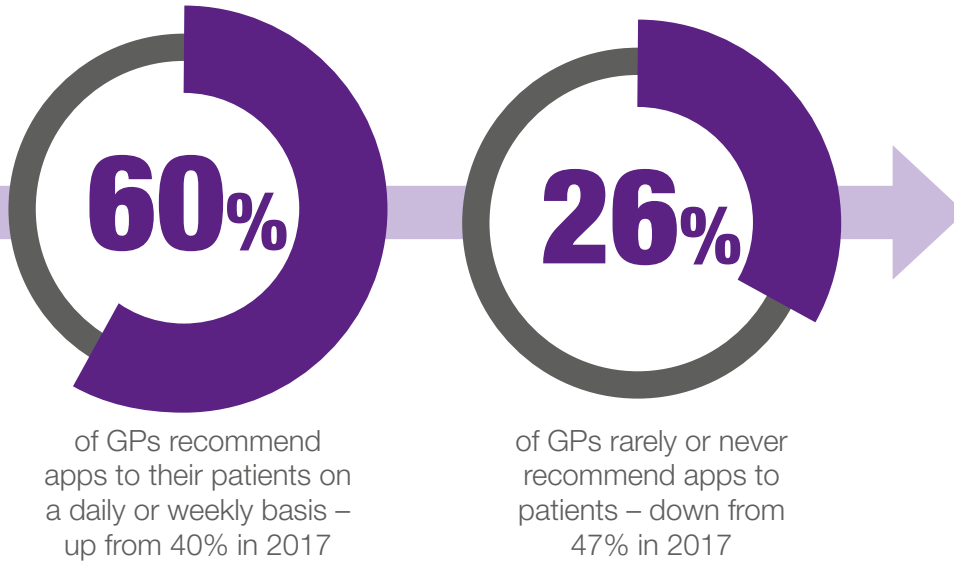
All electronic resources I regularly use are available on my desktop computer








I do not want to use my personal device for patient confidentiality reasons and for my own safety and security

Recommending apps

GPs have significantly increased their rate of recommending apps to patients







The most recommended apps relate to:

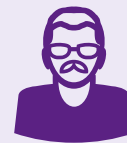
-  Mental health
-  Fitness
-  Nutrition
-  Family planning
-  Smoking cessation

GPs would recommend health apps more often if:

-  They had more time
-  They had improved knowledge and information about particular apps from a trusted source
-  They would integrate more with clinical software
-  They were endorsed

Reasons for not recommending apps

-  Lack of knowledge about effective apps
-  Lack of a trustworthy source to access effective apps
-  Lack of patient digital literacy
-  Lack of integration into clinical software and workflows



Complex legislation covering issues such as privacy makes implementation of useful apps more complicated



There is a lack of training provided to GPs and general practice registrars to help them translate the application into clinical practice

My Health Record



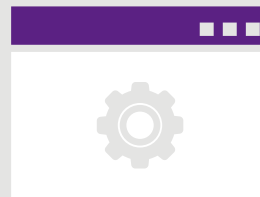
73%

of GPs work in practices uploading patient information to My Health Record



30%

of GPs have accessed a patient's health information via My Health Record that would not have otherwise been available to them



54%

do not feel adequately prepared to manage the impacts of the expansion, via an opt-out model, of My Health Record in their practice

eHealth professional development



The most used platform for eHealth professional development was webinar

41%

of GPs participated in eHealth professional development within the last 12 months



The most cited eHealth professional development topic was My Health Record



Healthy Profession.
Healthy Australia.