



THE UNIVERSITY  
OF QUEENSLAND  
AUSTRALIA

CREATE CHANGE

# TELEHEALTH CONSULTANCY

Centre for Online Health



For further information or to discuss how we can support you:

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CRICOS Provider No: 00025B

# Acknowledgements

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# Message from the Director

The field of telehealth is revolutionary and complex, and its paradigm has moved away from remote care to a much broader view that telehealth should be used to help everybody—irrespective of distance. Telehealth is a disruptive process which has significantly more potential than first realised. While the uptake of telehealth has been slow, the next 10–15 years will see a more rapid adoption of this application in health services. Factors such as the evolution of new communication technologies, reduced costs of telehealth equipment and telecommunications, and ubiquitous access to health records and administration systems will work in favour of new sustainable models of care incorporating telehealth. These will bolster a health system facing escalating demand and rising service costs.

Disruptive technologies will lead to changes in decade-long practices in the health system. These changes will impact the way health services are delivered and affect all stakeholders, including clinicians and patients. Significant changes in the way health services are delivered must be supported by robust and contemporary service designs, implementation strategies and evaluation plans. Our consultancy service frequently supports federal and state governments, non-government organisations, non-profit organisations, academic centres and industry partners. Through our consultancy service, we provide our partners with core competencies in telehealth, which are practical and relevant for their health systems.

If you are looking to raise awareness about telehealth, seeking support in the establishment of a telehealth service, or would like to develop your staff with professional development in any area of telehealth, please don't hesitate to reach out to us to discuss how we can assist you on your journey.

**Professor Anthony Smith**  
Director, Centre for Online Health,  
Centre for Health Services Research,  
The University of Queensland



# About the Centre for Online Health

The Centre for Online Health (COH) is Australia's leading academic telehealth centre and world-renowned for its telehealth expertise. Established in 1999, COH is the cornerstone of the recently founded Centre for Health Services Research, Faculty of Medicine, at The University of Queensland. The COH is a major contributor to the advancement of telehealth knowledge globally. It produces the highest volume of peer-reviewed publications for any individual academic centre.

The COH consists of a multidisciplinary team of research translation experts, including academic researchers, clinicians, educators, technicians, engineers, health economists and administrators. Together, they pride themselves on a broad range of projects delivering solutions to real-world clinical problems. The COH team believes in better healthcare and stronger communities through telehealth. Their mission is to contribute to this vision by:

- Applying telehealth to address challenges in clinical service delivery;
- Seeking, producing and sharing evidence to guide the integration of telehealth into clinical practice and policy; and by
- Developing, implementing and evaluating new telehealth-supported models of care to facilitate efficiency, effectiveness and equity in healthcare.

As a result of its pragmatic approach and industry focus, COH has established strong partnerships with some of Australia's largest healthcare providers. This includes consultancies commissioned by state health departments and the Commonwealth Government's Department of Health. In 2011, COH consultants authored a national report on telehealth implementation and technical requirements. Impacting national policy, this report guided the Commonwealth Government's strategic decision to fund telehealth through the Medical Benefits Schedule. The COH enjoys international recognition for its expertise in telehealth research, clinical service delivery, education and training, and consultancy.



Research

Education & Training

Clinical Service

Consultancy

# Introduction to Telehealth

## What is telehealth?

There is no single definition of telehealth. The World Health Organization defines telehealth as, "the use of telecommunications and virtual technology to deliver health care outside of traditional health-care facilities" (World Health Organization 2018). In Australia, a country marked by geographic remoteness, telehealth is often referred to as the delivery of clinical services to provide healthcare at a distance.

## Why consider telehealth?

Telehealth is important to provide high quality healthcare to people and communities in the most efficient manner - regardless of their location. It can be used to provide

- Healthcare services across a large number of specialties;
- Regularly scheduled clinics, ad hoc or emergency consultations; and;
- Medical, dental, allied health and nursing services.

Telehealth is now also becoming popular for healthcare delivery in metropolitan areas. An increasing number of people opt to receive health services from the convenience of their own home or during a lunch break from their workplace, rather than having to commute. In response to this increasing demand, the number of available telehealth services is on the rise. There is an increase in videoconferencing services for psychology, counselling, psychiatric services, GP advice and many more.

# Telehealth Consultancy

## Why engage telehealth consultancy?

An increasing number of organisations and health service providers recognise the benefits of implementing telehealth to supplement their existing delivery of health services. However, identifying where to start, how to lead the change, and effectively establishing and managing telehealth services can be a complex and overwhelming task. In fact, telehealth is a disruptive process that will likely encounter a multitude of barriers if not established and integrated carefully. Such barriers can include lack of awareness and unwillingness to change conventional practice, lack of skills with regard to the use of technology and etiquette, and lack of organisational support. Most barriers to telehealth can be addressed by providing relevant information and putting appropriate training in place. Our consultancy services can support you through this transition.

## Telehealth service implementation

Barriers	Enablers
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Clinical resistance</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Bespoke service design addressing clinical needs</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Licensure and reimbursement</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Evidence for cost and clinical effectiveness</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Insufficient/wrong equipment and telecommunications</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Organisational support</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Untrained staff</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Clinical champions</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Lack of support</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Sustainable funding models</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Inadequate remuneration</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Staff training (e.g. videoconsultation etiquette, use of technology, operation within service)</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Location of telehealth services</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Change management strategies</li></ul>
<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Clinical availability</li></ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>Interconnectivity</li></ul>



## Our services

Our services include public talks and keynotes, workshops and professional development and customised advice, including telehealth service evaluation. These can be ‘off-the-shelf’ or tailored to your specific requirements. We are passionate about supporting anyone seeking to:

- Raise awareness about telehealth
- Promote telehealth service uptake
- Design and set-up telehealth technology and equipment
- Establish a suitable and practical telehealth service
- Develop telehealth governance and management strategies
- Implement change management strategies in the workplace
- Implement telehealth training (including train the trainer)
- Examine if your telehealth service is achieving its objectives.

Our talks and keynote presentations are great for raising awareness and service buy-in. They are popular for conferences, professional development curricula, telehealth service launches and the like. Our professional development courses cover topics such as telehealth fundamentals, optimising videoconsultations, and telehealth service evaluation. They are typically delivered using a mixed learning design, including short lectures, interactive exercises, and group discussion. Most telehealth services are highly context-specific and our customised services provide the luxury of working closely with our clients and designing our service based on their specific requirements. This can range from an initial needs analysis to service design and establishment and service evaluation.

Service	Popular focus areas
<b>Talks and Keynotes</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• What is telehealth and what is not?</li><li>• Common telehealth myths</li><li>• Planning a telehealth service</li><li>• Stakeholder perspectives of telehealth</li><li>• Optimising videoconference</li><li>• Telehealth service evaluation</li></ul>
<b>Professional development</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Fundamentals of telehealth</li><li>• Optimising videoconsultations</li><li>• How to evaluate a telehealth service</li></ul>
<b>Customised services</b>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"><li>• Needs analysis</li><li>• Technology &amp; equipment recommendations</li><li>• Telehealth governance and change management</li><li>• Telehealth service design</li><li>• Customised train-the-trainer staff training</li><li>• Telehealth service evaluation</li></ul>

## Why work with us?

Because we are Pracademics! While we pride ourselves on globally recognised academic contributions to telehealth knowledge and expertise, we have spent many years working in practice ourselves and take a practical approach to solving real-world problems.

Our telehealth consultants include academic researchers, clinicians, educators, technicians, health economists, engineers and project managers. We are passionate about disseminating our expertise and experience, and frequently support stakeholders from a broad range of sectors in their telehealth endeavours. Common client groups include health professionals (including medical, nursing and allied health), telehealth coordinators, telehealth recruiters, government stakeholders, funding bodies, and industry organisations establishing telehealth services. If you're unsure about whether we're the right match for your telehealth requirements, get in touch to discuss the services you're after.

## How we work

When you first contact us, we will ask you for a brief overview of what it is you're seeking help with. If it sounds like something we might be able to help you with, we will organise a time to meet with you. This meeting usually takes about 30 minutes and can be in person, over the phone or via videoconference. We take this time to understand your requirements, clarify initial questions, and discuss how we could get involved and the indicative cost involved. If a collaboration sounds promising, we will draft a proposal for your consideration.

## Pricing

Most of our services are priced on standard hourly academic consultancy rates. A different pricing structure is available for our workshops. Most services are customised and priced according to time and expertise required to complete the work. As most telehealth services are highly context-specific, it's best to get in touch and discuss your specific requirements to estimate a cost.

# Case examples

## CheckUP

*CheckUP* is a non-profit organisation addressing inequity by delivering health services to the people and communities that need it most.

*CheckUP* commissioned COH to perform an analysis of *CheckUP*-supported outreach services. In particular, they were interested in understanding the impact of telehealth substitution on services and costs. Our work contributed to a report commissioned by Queensland Health in association with *CheckUP*.

We assisted by:

- Identifying and providing analysis of funding gaps in the provision of outreach services throughout Australia.
- Providing examples of how Medicare funding for services would be affected by telehealth substitution.
- Providing examples of how telehealth substitution may improve service delivery.
- Determining factors impacting the cost of providing in-person specialist outreach services and identifying how telehealth substitution affects these factors.
- Modelling and reporting the potential costs and savings of telehealth substitution.

Substituting a portion of traditional in-person outreach services with telehealth helps provide high-quality, timely, and cost-effective healthcare to people living in rural and remote communities. The report will continue to inform future service development and negotiations with state and Commonwealth governments.



Image kindly provided by Murri School

# Metro South Health Waiting List

Metro South Health (MSH) provides public health services in the south east of Queensland. MSH approached COH for advice on how to identify and prioritise telehealth opportunities for their region.

COH consultants examined specialist outpatient service activity and advised where telehealth could potentially help reduce waiting lists for outpatient care. The key strategies included image-based triage for outpatient referrals and the utilisation of videoconsultations.

Research demonstrates that image-based triage successfully reduces unnecessary referrals, allowing less serious conditions to be effectively managed in general practice. It is also estimated that videoconsultations could potentially replace 30% of outpatient referrals. Our report provided a full description of current outpatient waiting lists and details on possible telehealth interventions.



## Department of Health - Ageing and Aged Care

The Commonwealth Government's Department of Health commissioned COH to provide expert advice and options regarding the Australia-wide implementation of telehealth.

We assisted by assessing telehealth activities throughout Australia and reviewing the use of telehealth internationally. We produced two national reports

1. Telehealth Assessment Report: This report provides background information for a broad range of telehealth implementations, including videoconferencing.
2. Telehealth Business, Advice and Options Report: This report presents business requirements and technical advice for the implementation of videoconsultations.

These reports provide a strong foundation for planning a telehealth service that is technically sound, clinically effective, economically viable and sustainable. The outcome of this consultancy was the introduction of new Medicare item numbers for videoconsultations in 2011.



# Our partners



## COH Telehealth Consultants



Top (left to right):  
 Prof Anthony Smith  
 Dr Centaine Snowswell  
 Ms Monica Taylor  
 Mr Adam Mothershaw

Bottom (left to right):  
 Dr Helen Haydon  
 Dr Liam Caffery