



# DIGITAL HEALTH

Findings from the general practitioner interviews

May 2017

Proudly funded by:



*distance is no obstacle*

# Purpose

- The eHealth Business Development Network was tasked with conducting telephone interviews with a hand-picked sample of rural GPs familiar with Rural Health West.
- The aim of these interviews was to determine what future services Rural Health West could provide to rural GPs and their patients to assist them to access the benefits of digital health technology.



*distance is no obstacle*

# Methodology

A sample of 42 GPs were selected, of which 34 completed interviews. Selection was based upon:

- inner regional, rural and remote distribution;
- solo and group practice distribution; and
- close ties with Rural Health West.

The interviews were semi-structured, with discussion being guided by focus questions to determine:

- how GPs felt about eHealth generally, including enabling factors and barriers to uptake;
- what resources were currently used by the GPs; and
- what Rural Health West could do to support the GPs in the digital health space, with their knowledge of Rural Health West programs and services.

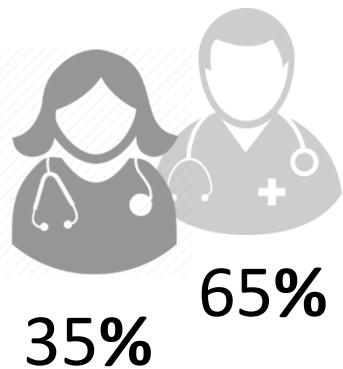
A small number of responses were collected as paper surveys and online.



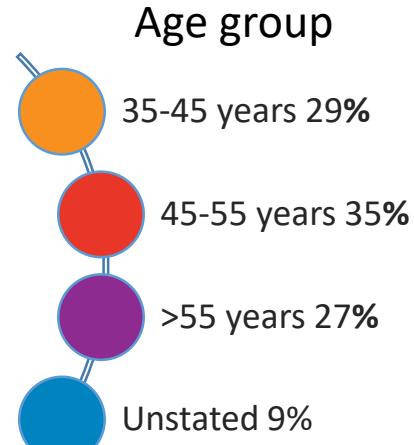
*distance is no obstacle*

# GPs Interviewed

Gender



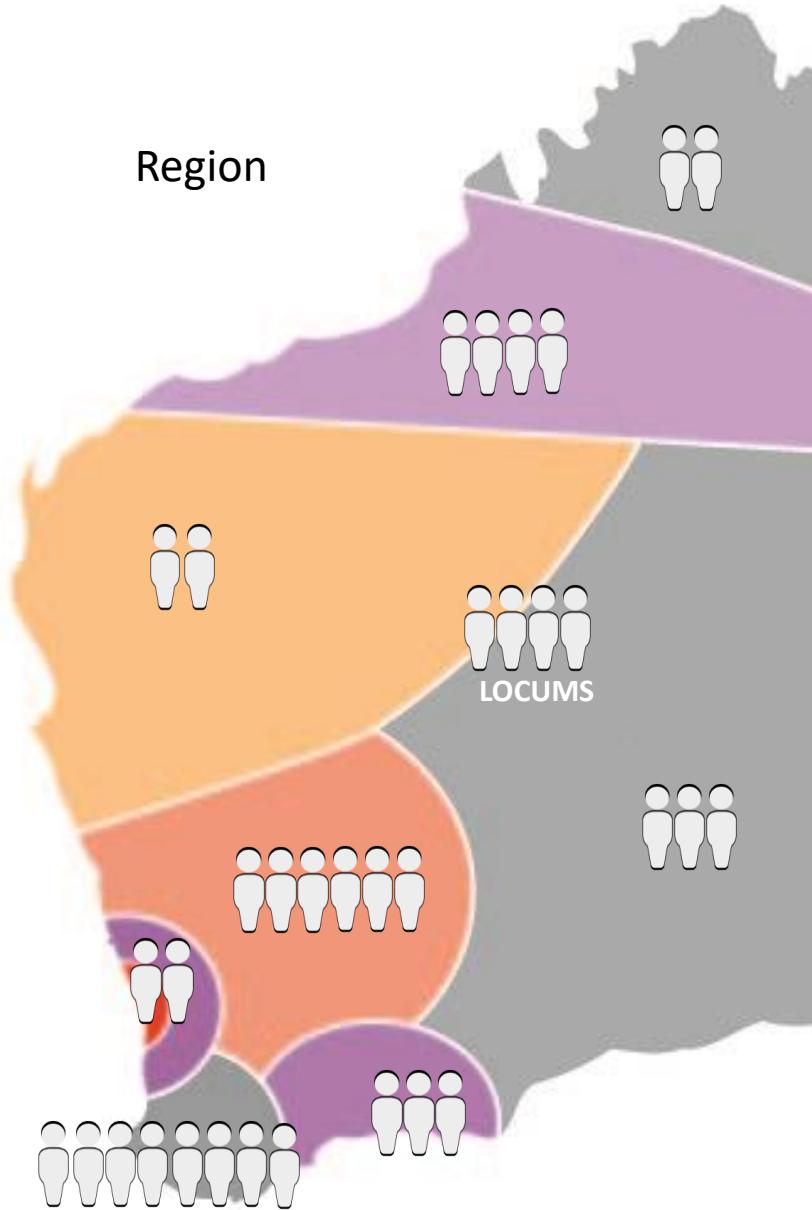
Age group



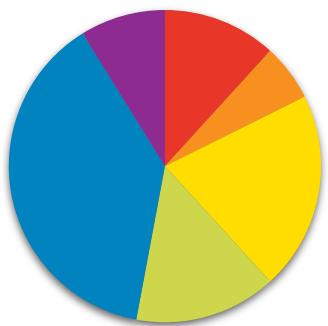
Country of training



Region



Remoteness area



Fellowship



94%

Survey method



13% 84% 3%

*distance is no obstacle*

■ N/A ■ RA1 ■ RA2 ■ RA3 ■ RA4 ■ RA5

# What digital health are GPs using?



Telehealth

**71%**



Mobile & Wearable

**18%**



Digital health systems

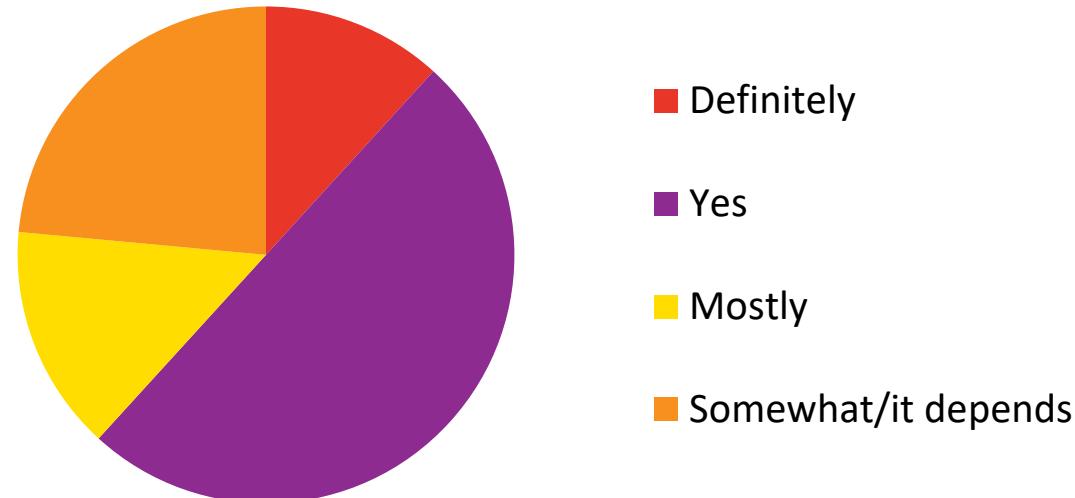
**71%**



Connecting patients  
to services

**44%**

Do you think eHealth is beneficial to your patients?



“ Definitely. Especially to remote areas, telehealth is a convenient service to enable patients access to GP care ”

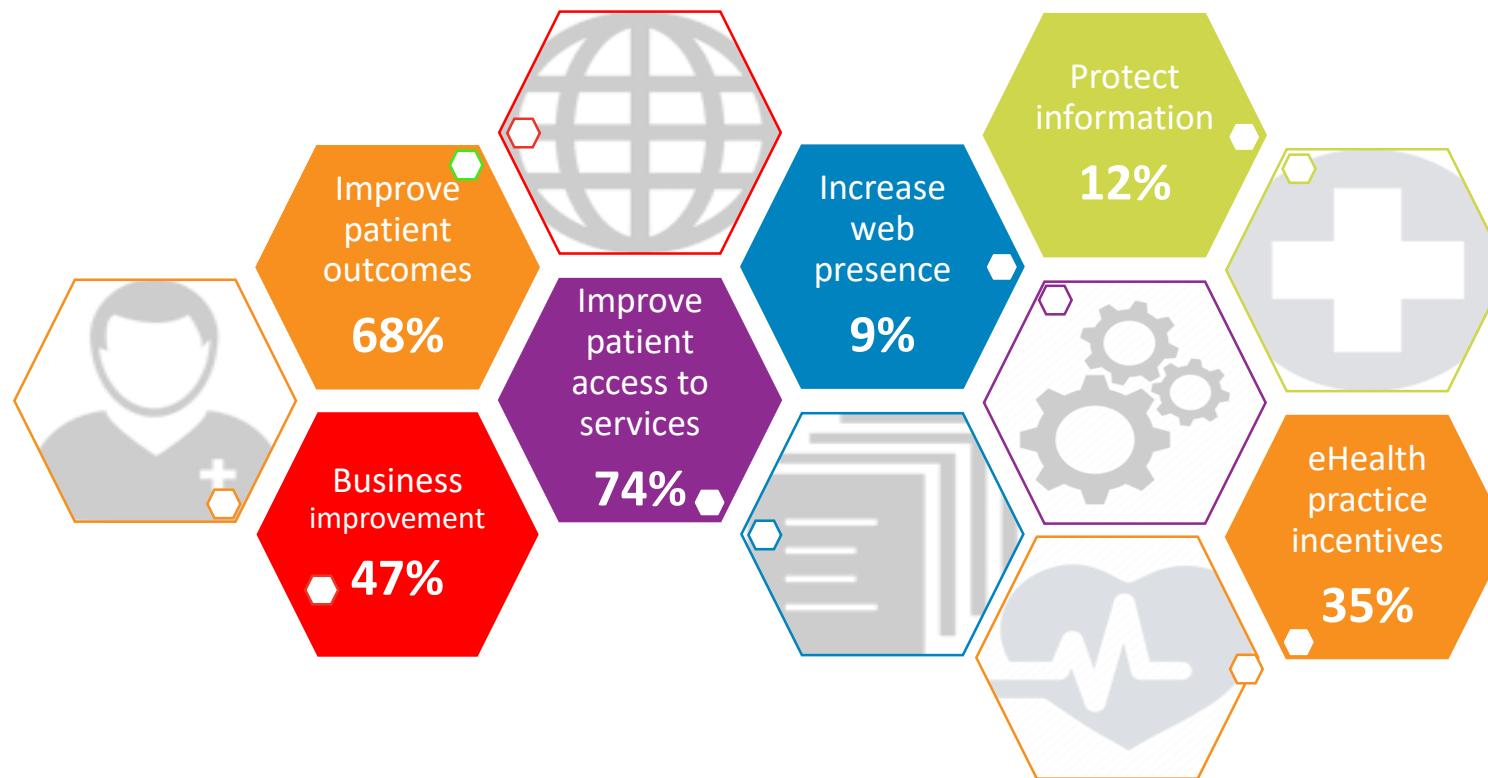
“ eHealth record: No, complete flop. Patients can choose and info can be extremely debatable ”



*distance is no obstacle*

# Why do GPs adopt digital health?

What motivated you to implement digital health technologies?



*distance is no obstacle*

“*Improve patient outcomes - absolutely, better continuity of care, better records of their chronic conditions.*”

“*Improve patient outcomes - Skype consults with specialists are extremely beneficial.*”

“*We have invested a lot of time, money and training into our practice IT and our records. We use it to save time, help manage the paperwork and deal better with the hospital.*”

# What are the barriers to uptake?

IT professional support  
participation by other professionals

cost

lack of skills and understanding

ability to bill Medicare

time constraints

security concerns

hospital participation

connection and/or coverage issues

patient uptake

software compatibility and standards

staff training opportunities

Specialist accessibility and clinician directories



*distance is no obstacle*

# What resources do GPs want?



- Better connections
- More reliable
- Better coverage



- More professional development
- CPD points for technology learning
- Workshops to trial technology



- Secure messaging
- Data security reassurance
- Reliable, provable transmission



- Better connectivity between systems
- Standard operating platforms, data centralisation
- More reliable systems



- My Health Record explained
- Hospital participation
- Clinician directories



- Better advocacy from government, RACGP
- Better information and promotion of digital health
- Example practices; case studies



- Financial incentives
- Funding for technology
- Medicare reimbursement, especially for Telehealth



- Practice support and webinars
- Dedicated support personnel
- Consultancy and advisory services
- Fact sheets and documented information

*distance is no obstacle*

# What could rural health west do?



## Research

- Conduct further research into digital health in rural health provision
- Develop an understanding of available technologies and assess best solutions for different environments
- Develop specialist clinician directories



## Support

- Develop existing education platforms with a focus on digital health
- Extend existing practice support services in technology
- Establish a digital health resource centre



## Advocate

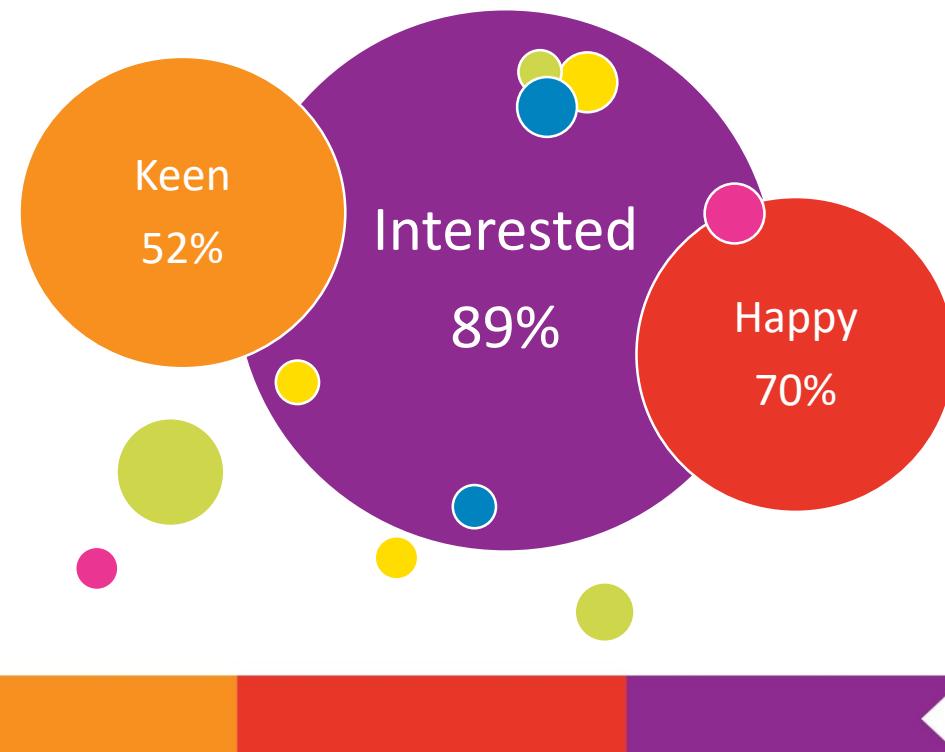
- Lobby for better internet coverage and infrastructure in rural areas
- Encourage funding for digital health activities including GP to patient telehealth consultations
- Support better sharing of information

*distance is no obstacle*

# Acknowledgements

Thank you to the general practitioners who made time for these interviews and who were so enthusiastic and so generous with their time and knowledge. Thanks also to their practice and support staff.

## How did the doctor respond to the interview?



Thank you to the Rural Health West eHealth Business Development Network and additional interviewers:

Annie Rowe  
Beth McEwan  
Caitlin Bradley  
Julie Holloway  
Kristy Law

Laura Harnett  
Laura Humphry  
Leesa Thomas  
Lorraine Tracey  
Michael Cordery

Nila Cecconi  
Paul Smith  
Rebecca Salsano