



# DIGITAL HEALTH

Findings from the general practitioner interviews

May 2017



Proudly funded by:



Government of **Western Australia**  
WA Country Health Service

# 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.

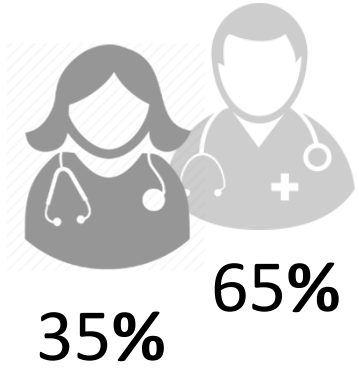
A small number of responses were collected as paper surveys and online.



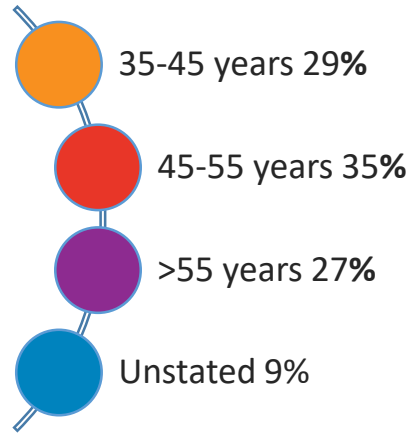
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# GPs Interviewed

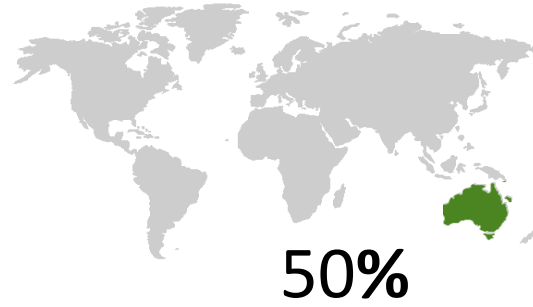
Gender



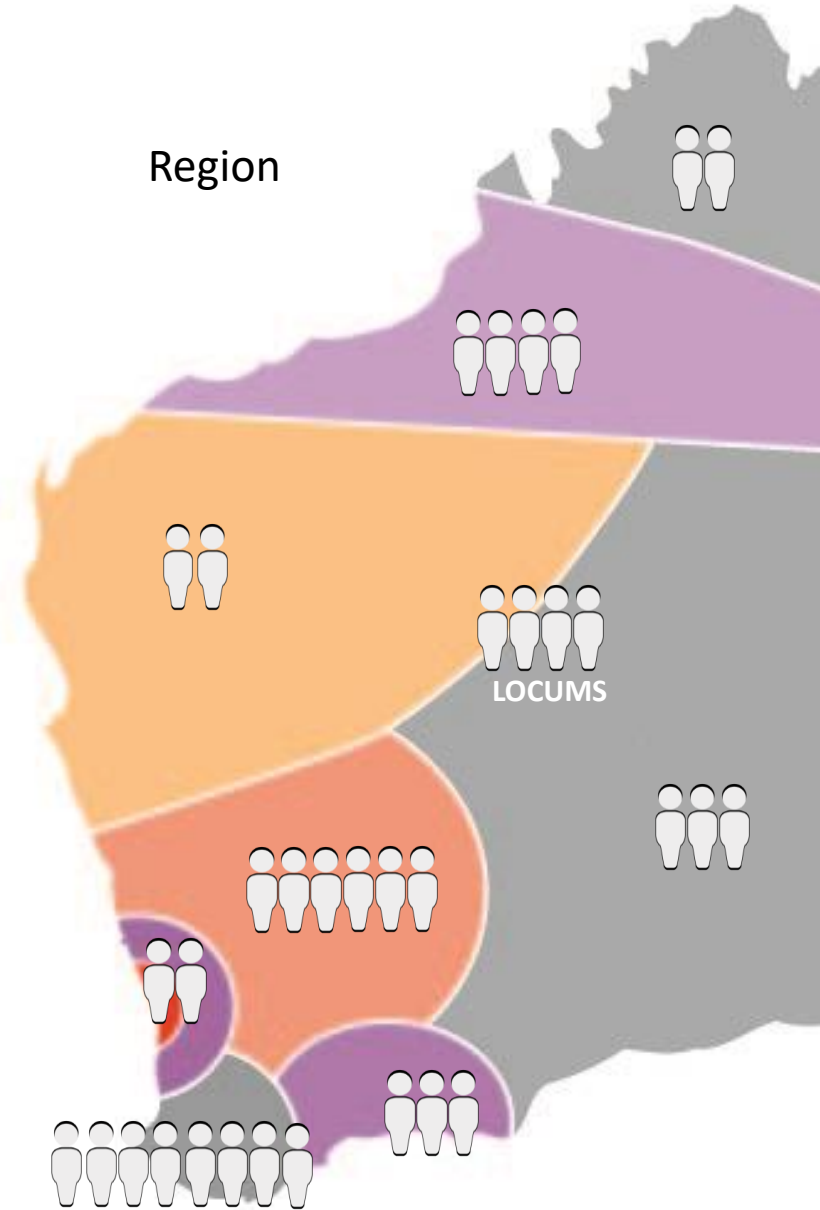
Age group



Country of training



Region



Remoteness area



■ N/A ■ RA1 ■ RA2 ■ RA3 ■ RA4 ■ RA5

Fellowship



94%

Survey method



13%



84%



3%

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# What digital health are GPs using?



Telehealth  
**71%**



Mobile & Wearable  
**18%**

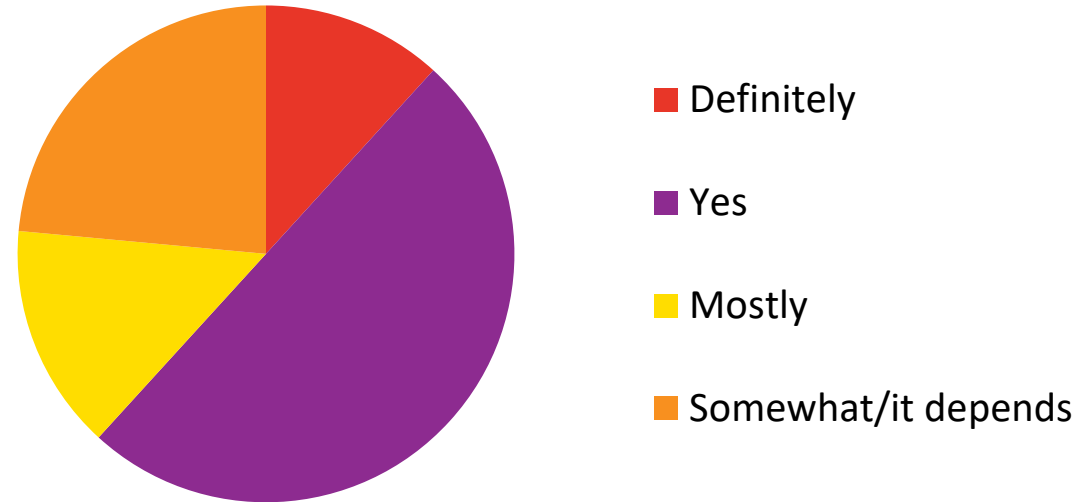


Digital health systems  
**71%**



Connecting patients  
to services  
**44%**

Do you think eHealth is beneficial to your patients?



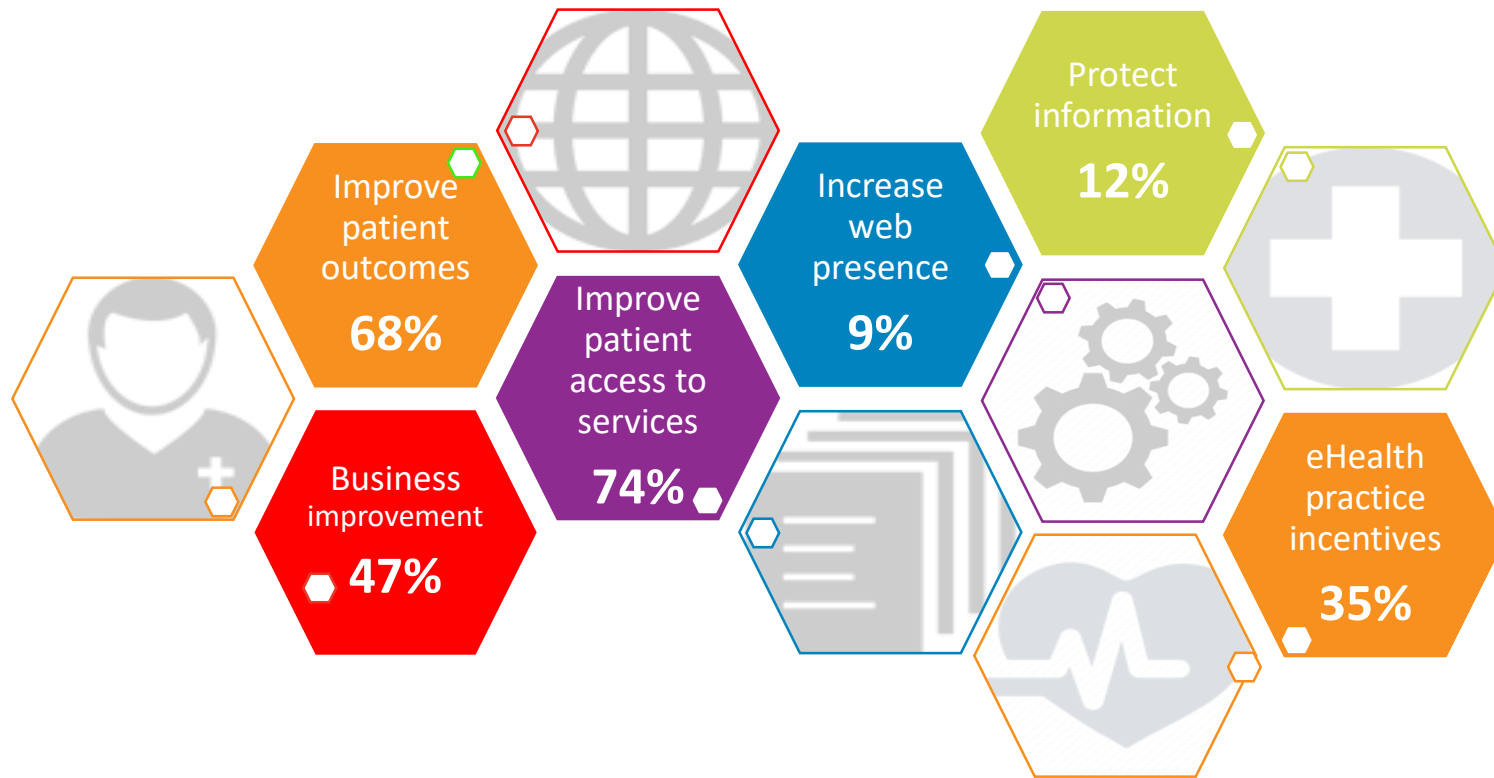
*“Definitely. Especially to remote areas, telehealth is a convenient service to enable patients access to GP care”*

*“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?



*“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.”*

*distance is no obstacle*

# 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



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# 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

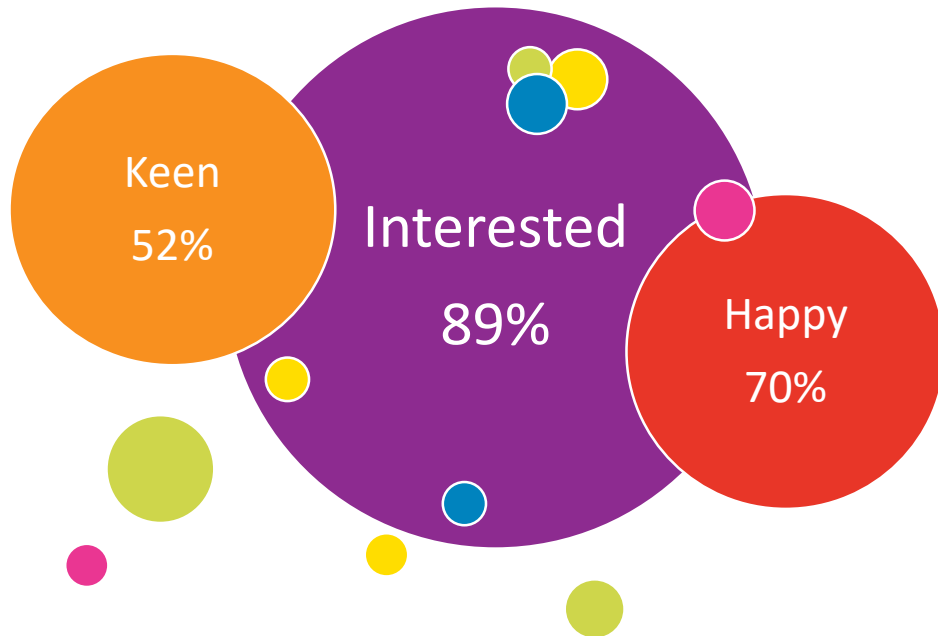
- Lobby for better internet coverage and infrastructure in rural areas
- Encourage funding for digital health activities including GP to patient telehealth consultations
- Support better sharing of information

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# 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?



GP was happy to chat, not bothered that the interview went over time

Lovely GP - very interesting discussion.

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

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