Telehealth by physiotherapists in Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic

Interim Report - October 2020
The research study was developed with input from clinicians, telehealth experts, business owners and funding bodies to evaluate the effectiveness and value of physiotherapy treatment delivered via telehealth during the COVID-19 pandemic. The project measured the following objectives:

- the characteristics of physiotherapists who implemented telehealth services
- the nature of the services
- the types of patients who utilised telehealth physiotherapy services
- the types of conditions that were treated and their management
- patient outcomes and experiences
- consultation features

This information will be used to advocate for ongoing funding of telehealth services by physiotherapists. It is a cross-sectional online survey with ethics approval obtained through the University of Melbourne.

Participation eligibility?
Participating physiotherapists are:
- registered to practice in Australia.
- working in private practice or community health.
- delivering physiotherapy care via video conference.

Project timeline
- Expression of interest – April 2020
- Physiotherapist survey – May 2020
- Patient survey, first round – May 2020 onwards.
- Patient survey, final round – November 2020.

The project will be completed in December 2020 and the final report will be published in March 2021.
EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

74% of patients are willing to pay for Telehealth

88% of Telehealth was covered by Private Health Insurance

30% of patients who used Telehealth are over 60 years old

60% of patients used Telehealth to ease pain

90% of patients felt safe using Telehealth

60% of patients are likely to use telehealth after the pandemic
SUMMARY OF RESULTS

**Physiotherapist summary**

**Total surveyed**

- **People**: 212
  - WOMEN 73%
  - MEN 27%

**Location**

- **State**:
  - NT: 0%
  - WA: 8%
  - SA: 7%
  - ACT: 2%
  - NSW: 22%
  - QLD: 20%
  - VIC: 38%
  - TAS: 3%

**Physiotherapist experience**

- **Physiotherapy experience**: 18.4 YRS
- **Postgraduate qualifications**
  - No: 36%
  - Bachelor: 13%
  - Master: 24%
  - PhD: 12%
  - Other: 12%
  - None: 7%

**Clinic type**

- **Practice(s)**
  - Family/general practitioner: 60%
  - Home/primary care: 10%
  - Community health care centre: 7%
  - Ever health centre: 7%
  - Preventive health services: 7%
  - Private practice: 6%
  - Public health: 5%
  - Other: 4%

**Clinic location**

- **State**
  - VIC: 38%
  - NSW: 22%
  - QLD: 20%
  - ACT: 2%
  - TAS: 3%

**Training conducted**

- **Prior training for telehealth delivery**
  - Online training: 10%
  - In-person training: 4%
  - No training: 86%

**Telehealth consult types**

- **One-on-one session**
  - Number of patients per VC group class: 14%
  - Family/general practitioner: 10%
  - Home/primary care: 4%
  - Community health care centre: 4%
  - Preventive health services: 4%
  - Preventive primary care: 4%
  - Preventive health services: 2%
  - Private practice: 2%
  - Public health: 2%
  - Other: 2%

**Physiotherapist offering Telehealth one-on-one session**

- **Physio one-on-one VC experience (out of 10)**: 4.8
  - Level of VC experience at study entry: 4.8
  - Confidence providing consultations by VC: 6.8

**Physiotherapist offering Telehealth group classes**

- **Physio group VC experience (out of 10)**: 5.1
  - Level of group class VC experience at study entry: 5.1
  - Confidence providing group classes by VC: 7.4

**Duration of one-on-one session**

- **Face to face initial consultation duration**: 49.2 mins
- **VC initial consultation duration**: 48.2 mins

**Duration of group class**

- **Group class duration (mins)**: 50.23
SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Total surveyed

People

PATIENTS SURVEYED

388

WOMEN 77%
MEN 23%

Location

State

VIC: 44%
NSW: 12%
QLD: 15%
SA: 10%
ACT: 6%
WA: 4%
TAS: 6%
NT: 0%

Region

Major city: 76%
Remote: 1%
Inner regional: 16%
Outer regional: 7%
Very remote: 0%

Technical experience

Confidence using technology in day to day life

Not at all: 0%
Somewhat: 5%
Moderately: 10%
Extremely: 85%

Use technology more than once per week

Mobile
97%
Computer
88%
Email
98%
Tablet
56%
Internet
99%
Videoconference
58%
Social
80%

Treatment background

How long have you have the problem

< 6 mths: 10%
6–12 mths: 26%
< 12 mths: 51%

Predominant body part being treated

Pelvic floor: 3%
Whole body program: 3%
Hand/Wrist: 6%
Forearm: 6%
Elbow: 6%
Upper arm: 5%
Shoulder: 4%
Foot/Ankle: 7%
Lower leg/calf: 6%
Knee: 10%
Thigh: 12%
Hip/pelvis: 20%
Abdomen: 22%
Chest: 23%
Back: 25%
Neck: 25%
Head: 25%

Main reasons sought treatment

Pain: 60%
Other: 13%
Impaired function: 46%
Reduced cardiovascular fitness: 4%
Frailty: 1%
Reduced cardiovascular fitness: 4%
Definitely not: 14%
Definitely: 5%
Probably: 5%
Unsure: 15%
Probably not: 14%

Post treatment

Global rating of change improvement

Overall: 30%
Pain: 30%
Function: 27%

How likely to now consider surgery

Definitely not: 61%
Definitely: 5%
Probably: 5%
Unsure: 15%
Probability not: 14%

Telehealth platform types

Which video conferences services

One-on-one consultations: 48%
Group classes: 52%

Telehealth experience

Experience with VC technology (0–10)

7.2

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*This is preliminary data and information may change once all surveys are completed.
Patient video conference (VC) one-on-one summary

### Telehealth consultations

- **Total number**: 284
- **One-on-one VC consultations for this problem**: 3.5
- **One-on-one VC of overall physio treatment for this problem**: 54%

### Previous consultations

- **Satisfaction with one-on-one VC of overall physio treatment for this problem**: 54%

### Would you recommend Telehealth

- **How effective was the care for your problem?**
  - Not at all: 4%
  - Somewhat: 13%
  - Moderately: 36%
  - Greatly: 23%
  - Extremely: 21%

- **How likely would you be to choose VC for physio after the pandemic?**
  - Not at all: 31%
  - Somewhat: 24%
  - Moderately: 21%
  - Greatly: 19%
  - Extremely: 13%

### Telehealth payment overview

- **Duration**
  - One-on-one initial consultation duration: 38.1
  - One-on-one review consultation duration: 33.1

### Who paid for the initial consultation?

- Patient did not pay any of the fee: 26%
- Patient paid part of the fee: 30%
- Patient paid all the fee: 44%

### Who paid for the review consultation?

- Patient did not pay any of the fee: 26%
- Patient paid part of the fee: 38%
- Patient paid all the fee: 36%

### Who else paid for the initial consultation?

- Private health insurance
- Medicare
- NDIS
- Workers compensation scheme
- Department of Veteran Affairs
- Transport Accident Commission

### Who else paid for the review consultation?

- Private health insurance
- Medicare
- NDIS
- Workers compensation scheme
- Department of Veteran Affairs
- Transport Accident Commission

### Telehealth Satisfaction

- **Regarding overall expectations of one-on-one VC treatment**
  - Greatly exceeded: 23%
  - Somewhat exceeded: 36%
  - Satisfied: 34%
  - Somewhat exceeded: 15%
  - Not at all: 4%

- **How satisfied were you with information given prior**
  - Satisfied: 8.7
  - Not satisfied: 9

- **How satisfied were you with diagnosis/assessment**
  - Satisfied: 8.8
  - Not satisfied: 9

- **How satisfied were you with physio’s management**
  - Satisfied: 9.3
  - Not satisfied: 9.3

- **How satisfied were you with privacy/security**
  - Satisfied: 8.8
  - Not satisfied: 8.8

### Summary of Results

- One-on-one VC
- Satisfaction out of 10: 8.4

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*This is preliminary data and information may change as all surveys are completed.*
SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Patient video conference (VC) one-on-one summary

Telehealth Satisfaction (continued)

What did you value about physio by VC

Did the physio provide you with:

Treatment comparisons

How would you rate quality of VC care compared to in-person care for this problem

How would you rate VC physio compared to manual/hands on treatment?

How easy was it to use the technology required?

Telehealth safety

How satisfied were you with the physio’s management?

How satisfied were you with privacy/security during the consultation(s)?

How safe did you feel during the consultation and what was prescribed?

SUMMARY OF RESULTS

Interim Report – October 2020

This is preliminary data and information can change once all surveys are completed.
Telehealth consultations

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>VC GROUP CLASSES</th>
<th>Previous consultations</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Total number</td>
<td>55</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of VC group classes for this problem</td>
<td>19.1</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Percentage of one-on-one VC of overall treatment for this problem</td>
<td>53%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Had in-person group classes with same physio for same problem</td>
<td>67%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Number of in-person group classes</td>
<td>42.9</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

Satisfaction out of 10

- How satisfied were you with information given prior: 8.8
- How effective did you find it: 8.3
- How comfortable did you feel communicating via VC: 8.5
- How likely are you to recommend it: 8.6
- How satisfied were you with the physio's management: 8.8
- How likely are you to choose VC after pandemic: 7.1
- How safe did you feel: 8.9
- How easy was it to use VC technology: 8.6

Treatment comparisons

- How would you rate quality of VC care compared to in-person care for this problem:
  - Much lower: 0%
  - Much better: 3%
  - Moderately lower: 6%
  - Moderately better: 36%
  - Slightly lower: 35%
  - Same: 42%

- How easy was it to use the technology required:
  - Not at all: 0%
  - Somewhat: 11%
  - Moderately: 20%
  - Extremely: 69%

How satisfied were you with the physio's management:

- Not at all: 0%
- Somewhat: 11%
- Moderately: 25%
- Extremely: 64%
- Not at all: 15%
- Somewhat: 15%
- Moderately: 20%
- Extremely: 44%

Telehealth safety

- How comfortable did you feel communicating with the physio:
  - Not at all: 5%
  - Somewhat: 13%
  - Moderately: 16%
  - Extremely: 67%

- How satisfied were you with privacy/security during the group classes:
  - Not at all: 0%
  - Somewhat: 13%
  - Moderately: 16%
  - Extremely: 69%

- How safe did you feel during the group classes and what was prescribed?
  - Somewhat safe: 40%
  - Moderately safe: 40%
  - Extremely safe: 20%