**Presentation title**

Telehealth consultations in GP registrars’ practice: a cross-sectional study nested within ReCEnT

**Explain why your paper is relevant, important and of interest to GP22 participants**

In December 2021, telehealth became a permanent feature of Australian primary care (1). Our research is the first to address the associations of telehealth use, compared to face-to-face consultations, amongst Australian GP trainees. Our findings have implications for clinical practice and GP training.

**Take home message**

* Telehealth consultations accounted for 21.4% of GP registrar encounters across an 18-month period, from 2020-2021.
* The majority of telehealth consultations were performed via telephone, which limits the ability to perform remote physical examination.
* Telehealth was less likely to be used for vulnerable population groups, which has implications for health equity and clinical practice.

**Background**

In March 2020, in response to COVID-19, Medicare item numbers were introduced for telehealth consultations in Australia. There is no available literature on Australian GP registrars’ telehealth use.

**Aim / Hypothesis**

To determine the prevalence and associations of Australian GP registrars’ telehealth consultations compared to face-to-face.

**Method**

Cross-sectional analysis of data from the Registrar Clinical Encounters in Training (ReCEnT) study. Data was collected over three 6-month terms in 2020-2021. Data was recorded by GP registrars from three regional training organisations delivering training in NSW, ACT, Victoria, and Tasmania.

**Results**

1,168 GP registrars recorded 102,286 clinical encounters, with 21.4% (95% CI: 21.1%-21.6%) performed via telehealth. Of these, 96.6% were telephone (95% CI: 96.3%-96.8%) and 3.4% videoconference (95% CI: 3.2%-3.7%). Among other significant associations, telehealth was less likely to be used for patients aged ≥65 years (for 65-74 years OR 0.83, 95% CI: 0.76-0.91, p<0.001, and for 75+ years OR 0.87, 95% CI: 0.79-0.96, p=0.005, both compared to patients aged 15-34 years). Telehealth was less likely to be used for culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) patients (OR 0.81, 95% CI: 0.73-0.90, p<0.001).

**Discussion**

GP registrars had lower telehealth uptake compared to nationwide GPs (37% telehealth for nationwide GP attendances from March 2020 - July 2021) (2). This may reflect decreased confidence in conducting telephone consultations, which has been reported internationally amongst GP trainees pre-pandemic (3). Patients ≥65 years were less likely to be seen via telehealth, which was comparable to existing literature (4, 5), as were CALD patients, which may reflect communication and language barriers to telehealth use.

**Conclusion**

Most telehealth consultations were performed via phone, which limits the ability to perform remote physical examination. Future research should focus on strategies to increase videoconferencing uptake. Our findings also suggest barriers to telehealth amongst vulnerable population groups, which has implications for health equity.

**References**

1. The Hon Greg Hunt MP. Permanent telehealth to strengthen universal Medicare [Press Release]. Canberra: Australian Government Department of Health; 2021 [cited 2021 Dec 15]. Available from: <https://www.health.gov.au/ministers/the-hon-greg-hunt-mp/media/permanent-telehealth-to-strengthen-universal-medicare>.

2. Medicare Australian Statistics. Requested MBS category by group and subgroup processed from March 2020 to July 2021 [Online Database]. Canberra: Australian Government Department of Human Services; 2021 [updated 2021 Nov 25; cited 2021 Dec 14]. Available from: <http://medicarestatistics.humanservices.gov.au/statistics/pbs_group.jsp>.

3. Chaudhry U, Ibison J, Harris T, Rafi I, Johnston M, Fawns T. Experiences of GP trainees in undertaking telephone consultations: a mixed-methods study. BJGP Open. 2020;4(1).

4. Hammersley V, Donaghy E, Parker R, McNeilly H, Atherton H, Bikker A, et al. Comparing the content and quality of video, telephone, and face-to-face consultations: a non-randomised, quasi-experimental, exploratory study in UK primary care. Br J Gen Pract. 2019;69(686):e595-e604.

5. Hardie R-A, Sezgin G, Dai Z, Wabe N, Georgiou A. Socioeconomic and demographic comparisons in the uptake of telehealth services during COVID-19. COVID-19 General Practice Snapshot. 2021(2).