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Patients provide positive ratings in first statewide survey of virtual care experiences

The Bureau of Health Information (BHI) has today released survey results reflecting more than 2,500 adult patients' experiences of virtual care outpatient appointments with NSW public hospitals in 2020.

Most patients had positive overall experiences of virtual care during 2020, with more than nine in 10 saying their virtual care was 'very good' or 'good' (91%). The more virtual care appointments a patient had, the more positive they were likely to be about their overall experiences.

BHI Chief Executive Dr Diane Watson said this first statewide virtual care survey asked patients about their overall experiences of virtual care as an outpatient – via telephone or online – during 2020 and their most recent appointment.

"With the use of virtual care continuing to expand in recent years, and even more so during the COVID-19 pandemic when patients were responding to this survey, it is important we hear from them about their experiences," said Dr Watson.

Patients identified a range of benefits associated with their virtual care experiences in 2020 including convenience (73% of respondents), saving time (60%), feeling at ease in their own home/surroundings (37%) and saving money (30%).

While nine in 10 patients said, given the choice, they would use virtual care again, almost one-third (31%) said their virtual care experience was not as good as in-person appointments. These were most likely to be younger patients or patients with fewer virtual care appointments during 2020.

Dr Watson said it was important to consider the influence of the pandemic on experiences when looking at the results.

"Due to COVID-19 restrictions, patients may not have had the option to choose between in-person and virtual appointments," said Dr Watson.

When asked to reflect on their most recent virtual care appointment, patients also provided positive feedback on aspects of safe, high quality care:

- Almost eight in 10 patients said they were 'definitely' involved as much as they wanted in decisions about their care and treatment (77%), and were 'definitely' given enough information to manage their care at home (79%).
- More than nine in 10 patients said healthcare professionals were 'always' kind and caring (91%) and 'always' treated them with respect and dignity (94%).
- More than eight in 10 patients said health professionals 'always' explained things in a way they could understand (86%) and 'definitely' listened carefully to their views and concerns (85%).

Additionally, almost all patients (94%) said they did not experience any problems with the connection or technology during the appointment, with 72% receiving virtual care via telephone and 14% online.

"These results will provide important baseline information to help shape the use of virtual care during the current pandemic and beyond," said Dr Watson.

The report, *Patients' experiences of virtual care from NSW public hospitals – Results from the 2020 outpatient survey*, includes key findings and results for all questions at NSW-level and is available at bhi.nsw.gov.au

Please note, the results of this survey relate to virtual care outpatient appointments with NSW public hospitals, and not appointments with GPs.