



Data capability: From Data to Action

Pathways to Progress: Healthcare Access in Rural Victoria

Abstract title: Measuring Digital Maturity in General Practice

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Background and Aim

Western Victoria PHN engaged Semantic Consulting to deliver a Digital Health Maturity Assessment for general practices across the region. The purpose of the Digital Health Maturity Assessment was to better understand the spectrum of digital health maturity across general practice, to support a differentiated approach to digital health change and adoption based upon digital maturity.

Population Setting

The survey took place across Western Victoria, covering an area of 79,843 square km across 21 Local Government areas with a population of 714,740 (ABS, 2021). 153 practices from the Western Victoria region were surveyed, out of a total of 221 in this area.

Methods

Using a standard set of questions and an established scoring methodology a survey was sent to all General Practices and Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations in the region. The survey was branded as the Digital Self-Assessment Tool and was typically completed by practice managers (or GPs in the case of solo GP practices). In addition, 2 webinars were held, during which a walkthrough of the survey was given, and practice managers given the opportunity to ask questions.

Results/Findings

Key findings were as follows:

- Whilst the availability of ICT infrastructure, technology and digital health solutions is reasonably good, considerable work remains to get practices using these existing solutions to full effect.
- Knowledge and practice regarding cyber-security and disaster recovery continues to be problematic and requires specific attention to address critical vulnerabilities.
- Many practices reported staff required support when using new digital technologies. This should be considered when introducing new digital health technologies into general practices.

Conclusion

Western Victoria PHN should continue to develop its digital health change toolkit, enabling teams to provide change support to general practice based on their current maturity. In some instances, this may require different communications messaging and training materials depending on individual practice maturity. Western Victoria PHN should also consider extending the implementation of the digital health maturity assessment into allied health, pharmacy and commissioned services and re-running the survey in general practice in approximately 3 years, in order to determine progress.

Translational Impact/Implications for future practice

Findings from this research have been used to improve the implementation of the 2023 – 2026 WVPHN Digital Health Strategy.