

Plain Language Statement (physiotherapists' version)

Centre for Health, Exercise and Sports Medicine
Physiotherapy, Melbourne School of Health Sciences



Telehealth by physiotherapists in Australia during the COVID-19 pandemic

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Introduction

We invite you to consider participating in our research project and would like to give you some background information on why we think this project is important and on what we would like you to do if you decide to join us in this research.

This study is being led by the University of Melbourne, in association with researchers at the University of Queensland and Flinders University, clinicians and the Australian Physiotherapy Association.

What is the purpose of the study?

The COVID-19 pandemic has brought about a major shift from in-person physiotherapy management to physiotherapy management provided via telehealth. In light of this, temporary rebates are currently being provided by funding bodies to support telehealth by physiotherapists during the COVID-19 pandemic.

We will conduct an online survey of physiotherapists and their patients to describe the implementation, and outcomes, of telehealth by Australian physiotherapists during the COVID-19 pandemic. In particular, we will investigate physiotherapy provided via real-time (synchronous) videoconsultations. The objectives are to describe the demographics of a sample of physiotherapists who implemented telehealth services and the nature of the services, the demographics of patients who utilized telehealth physiotherapy services, the types of conditions and their management, patient outcomes and experiences, and consultation features. This information can help in decision making around future funding of telehealth services by physiotherapists once the pandemic has ended.

Who can participate?

You can participate if you are:

- A physiotherapist registered to practice in Australia
- In private practice or a community health centre
- Delivering physiotherapy care via videoconference (individual and/or group classes)

What does the participation in this research involve?

Following consent, you will complete an online questionnaire providing demographic information about yourself and your practice. This will take approximately 10-15 minutes.

You will be asked to send an email on behalf of the researchers to all of your patients aged 18 and over who have had one or more consultations via videoconference (either individual and/or group classes) in the preceding month for any condition and who have an email address. It is very important that you send it to all of your eligible patients so that there is no selection bias. The email will invite patients to take part in the study and will provide a link to a plain language statement describing the study and a consent form. You will then report to the study researchers, the number of emails sent out so that a response rate can be calculated.

Consenting patients will then complete Part A of an online survey – a questionnaire about demographics, their condition and prior experience with technology and telehealth which will take them approximately 5-10 minutes. Patients will also be asked whether they have completed their treatment with the physiotherapist (defined as no videoconferencing consultations currently booked or planned in the next month for that problem/condition). If they have completed their treatment by videoconference, they will then complete Part B of the survey – a questionnaire relating to their videoconferencing consultations which will take approximately 10-15 minutes. Those indicating that they have not yet completed their videoconferencing treatment with the physiotherapist will be sent a fortnightly email from the researchers. This email will ask whether or not they have completed their videoconferencing treatment with the physiotherapist. If they have, they will be asked to complete Part B of the survey. Those patients who have still not completed their videoconferencing treatment by 3 months post consent will complete Part B at that time point. The study co-ordinator will telephone patients who do not reply to the emails to assist with retention. You will not have access to information provided by your patients.

You will be asked to send out the study email again at monthly intervals until November 2020 at the latest to all new eligible patients in the preceding month. You will be asked to report to the study researchers, the number of emails sent.

At the conclusion of the study you will be asked to complete another short online questionnaire about your experience with videoconferencing. This will take approximately 15 minutes.

Data collected in this research project may also be used in future projects that are closely related to this project, or in the same general area of research as this project.

How do I consent to participate?

After reading this plain language statement in full, if you are willing to participate, you will be asked to read and complete the study consent form.

Are there any risks to people in this study?

There are no anticipated risks to you if you participate in this project.

How is this research funded and are there any disclosures?

This project is funded by the Physiotherapy Research Foundation

What are the benefits of this study?

The study will provide useful data for the Australian Physiotherapy Association, health insurers and government to help evaluate the implementation, and outcomes of physiotherapy delivered by telehealth during the pandemic. This can be used to help in decision making around extending funding of telehealth services by physiotherapists in the future once the pandemic has finished. Data contributed to this study may be used to address other research questions relating to physiotherapy treatment.

Who can I contact if I have any concerns about the project?

This research project has been approved by the Human Research Ethics Committee of The University of Melbourne. If you have any concerns or complaints about the conduct of this research project, which you do not wish to discuss with the research team, you should contact the Manager, Human Research Ethics, Research Ethics and Integrity, University of Melbourne, VIC 3010. Tel: +61 3 8344 2073 or Email: HumanEthics-complaints@unimelb.edu.au. All complaints will be treated confidentially. In any correspondence please provide the name of the research team or the name or ethics ID number of the research project. The Principal Investigators will be available throughout the study if you have any questions.

Can I withdraw from the study if I wish?

Your participation in this study is voluntary and you are free to withdraw from participation at any time. If you do not wish to take part, you are under no obligation to do so. By completing the surveys, your responses will become anonymous and they will be directly processed into a pooled group response. Due to the nature of this anonymous pooled data, you will not be able to withdraw individual data once you have completed the surveys.

Will my details be kept confidential?

We intend to protect your anonymity and the confidentiality of your responses to the fullest possible extent, within the limits of the law. Your name and contact details will be kept in a separate, password-protected computer file from any data you supply. Your responses will remain anonymous to the other physiotherapists, patients and Australian Physiotherapy Association throughout the study and only the researchers at the University of Melbourne will be able to identify your specific answers. Your responses will be pooled into overall group results. The responses you provide will be held on the REDCap online database. Once the data has been downloaded from REDCap, it will be stored electronically in computer files that are password protected on a secure University of Melbourne server and access will be limited to the study researchers. Data will be securely stored at the University of Melbourne for 5 years following publication of results. The confidentiality of your participation is assured by our procedure.

Will anyone else know the results?

All aspects of the study, including results, will be strictly confidential and only the researchers will have access to information on participants. We will produce a report and may publish the study results in a journal article and conference paper, but individual participants will not be

identifiable in such a report. The group results from the study will be made available to you following the completion of the study.

How do I get more information?

You should ask for any information you want. If you would like more information about the study, or if there is any matter about it that concerns you, either now or in the future, please do not hesitate to ask the researchers. You can do this by contacting Mr Ben Metcalf (Study Coordinator) on 03 8344 8127 or email b.metcalf@unimelb.edu.au

About the researchers:

Professor Kim Bennell is a research physiotherapist and Director of the Centre for Health, Exercise and Sports Medicine in the Department of Physiotherapy at The University of Melbourne. She is the Chief Investigator of this study.

Professor Rana Hinman is a research physiotherapist from the Centre for Health, Exercise and Sports Medicine in the Department of Physiotherapy at The University of Melbourne with expertise in telehealth.

Mr Ben Metcalf is a Research Scientist in the Centre for Health, Exercise and Sports Medicine in the Department of Physiotherapy, University of Melbourne.

Professor Trevor Russell is a Professor in the Division of Physiotherapy within the School of Health and Rehabilitation Sciences at the University of Queensland. His primary research focus surrounds the use of mobile technologies and telecommunication tools.

Dr Maayken van den Berg is a research physiotherapist at the School of Medicine, Department of Rehabilitation and Aged Care at Flinders University. Her areas of interest include technology-enhanced interventions, telerehabilitation and digital coaching.

Ms Karen Fynn is a physiotherapy clinician who specialises in online physiotherapy theory, practice, and education. She owns a business called Online Physio, and is an Australian leader in online physiotherapy theory, practice, and education.

Ms Shelley Crowther is a Senior Advisory, Policy and Government Relations of the Australian Physiotherapy Association.

Mr Samuel Crofts is a biostatistician in the Centre for Epidemiology and Biostatistics, Melbourne School of Population and Global Health, University of Melbourne.

Ms Jenny Aiken is the National Vice President of the Australian Physiotherapy Association and Chair of the Physiotherapy Research Foundation.

Ms Jenine Fleming is the Physiotherapy Research Foundation Administration Officer for the Australian Physiotherapy Association.

Mr David Mackenzie is a Research Assistant in the Centre for Health, Exercise and Sports Medicine in the Department of Physiotherapy, University of Melbourne.

Consent form (physiotherapists' version)

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Introduction

Consent to participate

- I have read the Plain Language Statement and I understand its contents.
 - I believe I understand the purpose, extent and possible risks of my involvement in this study.
 - I voluntarily consent to take part in this survey.
 - I understand that my participation is voluntary and that I am free to withdraw at any time.
 - I understand that I will remain anonymous to the other participants and only the researchers will be able to identify my specific answers.
 - I understand that the data from this research will be stored at the University of Melbourne and will be destroyed after 5 years.
 - I have been informed that the confidentiality of the information I provide will be safeguarded subject to any legal requirements; my data will be password protected and accessible only by the named researchers.
 - I understand that the data I contribute to this study may be used to address other research questions relating to physiotherapy treatment.
- ☐ I have read the Plain Language Statement
- ☐ I consent to participating in this study