

Plain Language Statement (patient 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 participation 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 and the Australian Physiotherapy Association.

What is the purpose of the study?

Physiotherapy is usually delivered in person at the physiotherapists' clinic. However, the COVID-19 pandemic has brought about a major shift from in-person physiotherapy to physiotherapy care provided remotely using technologies such as videoconferencing applications – known as 'telehealth'. In light of this, rebates are currently being provided by different funding bodies to help pay for telehealth by physiotherapists during the COVID-19 pandemic.

This study aims to describe the uptake and outcomes of telehealth provided by Australian physiotherapists during the COVID-19 pandemic. The objectives are to conduct surveys to describe the characteristics of a sample of physiotherapists delivering telehealth services and patients using them, the types of services, outcomes and experiences, and consultation features.

Who can participate?

You can participate if you:

- Have had one or more physiotherapy consultations (individual and/or group classes) **via videoconferencing** in the last month.
- Are aged 18 years of age and over
- Have an email address and access to the internet

What does the participation in this research involve?

Participation in the study involves completing a questionnaire about your physiotherapy treatment that you received by videoconference, either as individual consultations and/or in group classes. The questionnaire contains two parts. Part A can be completed after you enrol into the study. Part A includes questions about yourself (age, gender and geographic location), details

of your condition being treated and your experience in using video conferencing technology and will take around 5-10 minutes to complete.

Part B of the questionnaire can be completed once you have no more videoconferencing consultations for your current problem with the physiotherapist booked or planned within the next month. If you have completed consultations via videoconferencing at the time of enrolment in this study you may complete Part B immediately after completing Part A. If you are still seeing your physiotherapist for the same problem via videoconference (either individual or group classes), then you be asked to complete Part B after your videoconferencing consultations have been completed, or after 3 months, whichever occurs first. The researchers will send you an email every 2 weeks to ask if you have any further videoconferencing consultations booked or planned in the next month.

Part B of the questionnaire will contain questions about your experience undergoing physiotherapy by videoconference and will take around 10-15 minutes to complete. Questions will include the number, duration, cost of sessions and how the sessions were funded. You will also be asked to rate your satisfaction, convenience and confidence of the treatment provided and whether you had any troubles with the treatment. You will also answer questions about your overall change in your problem.

Please note that your physiotherapist will NOT be informed of whether or not you decide to take part in this study and if you do decide to take part, your answers will be confidential and NOT shared with your physiotherapist. Whether you choose to participate or not in this study will have no impact on your future care with your physiotherapist.

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 proposed study will provide useful data for the Australian Physiotherapy Association, health insurers and government to help evaluate the uptake, and outcomes of physiotherapy delivered by telehealth during the COVID-19 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 from 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 participants and physiotherapists 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 individual participants. We plan to produce a report and may publish the study results in journal articles and conference papers, but individual participants will not be identifiable in such a report. The 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 Finnin 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 (patient 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