

# Media release

Brisbane, 6 September 2022

## Developments in health technology make ‘virtual hospital wards’ a reality

It may sound like science fiction, but ‘virtual wards’ may become the normal experience for hospital patients suffering from non-urgent chronic conditions in just a few years. In a new [report](#) commissioned by one of the world’s largest insurance and assistance companies Allianz Partners, futurist Ray Hammond discusses how the pandemic has dramatically accelerated the projected timeline for many developments in healthcare and medical science delivering new technologies years earlier than predicted.

Increasing acceptance and usage of technology is expected to continue to rapidly evolve healthcare over the coming years. Just like wearables such as smartwatches have become ubiquitous, here are three new technology trends set to revolutionise health and wellbeing in Australia:

### 1. Telehealth is here to stay

Doctors and patients have embraced telehealth with global use of telehealth 78 times higher in February 2021 than it was in 2020. In response, dozens of pay-as-you-go apps have emerged, offering the opportunity for remote consultations with doctors. For patients seeking medical advice in an overloaded primary healthcare system, these on-demand apps provide patients the convenience of same-day consultations without the fear of spreading illnesses to doctors or others they may meet at a clinic.

### 2. The rise of virtual wards

Today, health technology includes devices that offer virtual snapshots of a patient’s vital signs. In the near future, non-critical patients will be able to be treated at home in a virtual ward fitted with an array of on-body sensors including fingertip oximeters that measure blood oxygen levels. Other sensors detect and record pulse rates, body temperature, sleep patterns, blood glucose levels, respiration levels and heart electrical activity.

### 3. Personalised healthcare is the next frontier

The Federal Government’s last budget allocated more than half a billion dollars for COVID MBS PCR tests. Around the country, laboratories have significantly expanded their testing capability to meet demand. In 2020, during the lockdown, the UK health system could perform up to 5,000 COVID tests a day. Since then, a vast diagnostics network has been created allowing up to 1.9 million COVID tests to be performed daily.

Some doctors believe that this testing network can be repurposed for other illnesses such as influenza, leading to more efficient and personalised healthcare delivery. By using this new testing structure, persons can be tested for antibodies and only receive vaccines if necessary.

Head of Medical Networks for Allianz Partners Australia Darren Thomas said: *“The pandemic has rapidly revolutionised health technology in just over two years resulting in developments*

*being adopted now that would have normally taken 10 to 20 years to evolve. We're committed to providing a range of healthcare options to our members. We see health technology as providing long-term benefits to members, allowing them to access better healthcare and to live independently."*

The Allianz Partners **COVID-19: How it accelerated the Future of Healthcare** report is available to read in full online [here](#).

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**ENDS**

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**References:**