

AHSPO 34th ANNUAL CONFERENCE LORNE 2024



PRESIDENTS OPENING SPEECH

Good morning, everyone and welcome to the 34th Annual AHSPO Conference here at the Mantra Lorne, and once again this year's conference has been a sell-out from April.

Can I start by acknowledging the Traditional Owners of the land on which we are having our conference. I pay my respects to their Elders, past and present, and the Aboriginal Elders of other communities who may be here today.

I'd like to start this opening with a quotation, "**It has become appallingly obvious that our technology has exceeded our humanity**" that's from a man who died in 1955, Albert Einstein.

Health technologies play a role in nearly every area of health. Using digital information and modern communication technologies effectively is vital to the future of our health system.

So, what are Health Technologies?

Health technology is a broad term meaning something that is intended to do any of the following:

- diagnose or treat medical conditions,
- promote health,
- provide rehabilitation,
- organise delivery of health care.

Health technologies include:

- tests
- medical devices
- medicines
- vaccines
- blood products
- procedures
- programs or systems involved in health care.

We use health technology assessments to decide which technologies can be sold in Australia and which ones qualify for Australian Government subsidy.

So, what is Digital Health?

Digital health is an umbrella term referring to a range of technologies that can be used to treat patients and collect and share a person's health information.

Digital health refers to using technology to improve the healthcare system for providers and patients alike. This includes:

- telehealth
- electronic health records
- electronic prescriptions
- healthcare identifiers
- electronic referrals
- electronic medication charts
- access to trusted data.

Australia's health sector has a long history of using innovative technologies to improve health care delivery. Digital health technologies have been effective in improving the availability and accessibility of health care services and products, particularly during the COVID-19 pandemic. Digital health is important to empower health care users and providers to

better manage health outcomes, as well as strengthen data systems across the health sector.

Australia has a significant history with digital technology in the health system, from the pedal-powered radio in 1929 to electronic-prescribing and COVID-19 vaccine passports in 2021. These technical developments are supported by initiatives such as My Health Record and the establishment of the Australian Digital Health Agency . Recent developments in digital health technology and services in Australia include:

- **Electronic prescribing**, an option for health care professionals, pharmacies and patients to use an electronic prescription as an alternative to paper prescriptions.
- **Medicare Online**, a portal to claim, update, and access health statements through an online account.
- **COVID-19 Vaccine Clinic Finder**, a national portal providing a complete list of all clinics in Australia, which allows consumers to compare clinics, check availability and book an appointment in one place.
- **Secure messaging** of clinical information, which allows for the secure, encrypted exchange of information between health professionals.
- **COVID-19 digital certificates**, a digitally accessible proof of COVID-19 vaccination administered in Australia.
- **My Health Record**, a secure digital health record where key health information can be stored and accessed by an individual and their authorised health care provider. When kept up to date, it can provide a more complete picture of an individual's health, and is available when and where it is needed, including in an emergency.
- **Video Conferencing**, for individuals and group consultations with clinicians, families, carers or interpreters and across multiple sites, and the monitoring and management of chronic conditions.
- **Remote Monitoring**, which may include wearable devices, smartphone apps, devices used at home, online portals and e-mail communications.

They can monitor blood pressure, blood glucose, heart rate, respiratory function, oxygen saturation, body temperature, body weight, and even body falls.

Remote monitoring improves access to healthcare services and provides more timely care, so people have a better quality of life and stay out of hospital.

So, what are the Benefits and Challenges?

The Benefits

Australians benefit from new health technologies and advancements in digital health as they:

- improve quality of life and patient outcomes,
- support Australians to stay as well as possible,
- make the healthcare system more efficient,
- empower healthcare workers to participate in their own care and access services more easily,
- improve communication with healthcare providers and provide real-time decision support,
- enhance data sharing between health systems, with better emergency response and a better understanding of service needs.

The Challenges

- **Access**, not everyone has the same opportunity or ability to use the technology required to utilise digital information.
- **Interoperability and data development**, to ensure seamless and accurate transfer of information with shared meaning between systems.
- **Data literacy and data citizenship**, relating to the understanding of personal data and its use, access, sharing and ownership.
- **Security and privacy**, to protect sensitive information from both unintentional and malicious disclosure.

I can't possibly close this section without giving a small mention to A.I. (Artificial Intelligence). A.I. and machine learning will be the next big thing for healthcare in Australia and we can expect to see more integration in the field.

Let's also not forget Robotics. Robots now have the ability to complete surgeries. Common orthopaedic surgeries can already be performed by pre-programmed devices. Service robots can help disinfect areas and perform routine tasks.

The possibilities are endless.

So just as I opened with a quote, let me finish with two diverse ones from two of the richest men in the world.

The first one is from **Jeff Bezos**, former CEO of Amazon,

"We're at the beginning of a golden age of A.I. Recent advances have already led to inventions that previously lived in the realm of science fiction – and we've only scratched the surface of what's possible."

Now the second one is a bit more ominous and it's from **Elon Musk**, the self-proclaimed "Techno King" of Tesla,

"A.I. doesn't have to be evil to destroy humanity...if A.I. has a goal and humanity happens to come in the way, it will destroy humanity as a matter of course without even thinking about it...no hard feelings."

Maybe we should keep our eye on Elon to see if he starts a new company called Cyberdyne Systems (the Japanese killer robot company) and starts dressing like a Terminator.

I would also like to bring your attention Education section and our new eLearning Courses. Debra will talk about this on Friday and thank you to Debra for the hard work putting this together and please speak to Debra if you need help

JOE

BLURB ABOUT SPEAKERS...Emily.

So let me now introduce an award-winning senior journalist and presenter with over 20 years of experience in Australia and Internationally, who has enjoyed her time with us as much as we have with her, so much so that this is her 3rd AHSP0 Conference as our MC...

Ladies and gentlemen please welcome Emily Rice.

Thank you

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