

Telehealth would improve Australia's mental health statistics

By Paul Budde

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Those already using telehealth services have praised its accessibility and efficiency (Image via Pixabay)

A survey by health professionals has shown that Australians would be more likely to use mental health support if offered via telehealth. [Paul Budde](#) reports.

AROUND 2005, in the days when we started to prepare for building the NBN, we had a special workgroup working on telehealth. At that time, we also discussed this with health professionals and asked them which areas of healthcare would benefit the most from the use of the new digital media.

The professionals' answers to this question focused on the delivery of services in relation to diseases and illnesses where people have a problem discussing this with GPs, specialists or even with family and friends. Mental health, sexual disease and illnesses were highlighted as examples.

By offering a telehealth facility, you would create a certain level of anonymity with no need, at least at

the start, for any face-to-face “confrontation”. Trust can be built from here for further action.

A [few months ago](#), we talked about telehealth in a more general way and its success since the Government has embraced the technology during the pandemic. I also used data from [Coviu](#) as it provided real data on its success. On the one hand, it is great for people like me to promote the use of technology for the purpose of services such as education, healthcare and social services. However, in the end, we do need hard data to prove that it indeed delivers the outcomes we envisaged.

With the COVID-19 pandemic, there has been a renewed focus on mental health. As we hear daily, this has affected millions of people around the world and its impact has reached well beyond physical health. From numerous lockdowns to millions of jobs affected, restrictions to seeing our loved ones and a massive change to the whole dynamic of our everyday schedules and lives. This has no doubt created very stressful situations and ultimately affected many people's mental health and wellbeing.

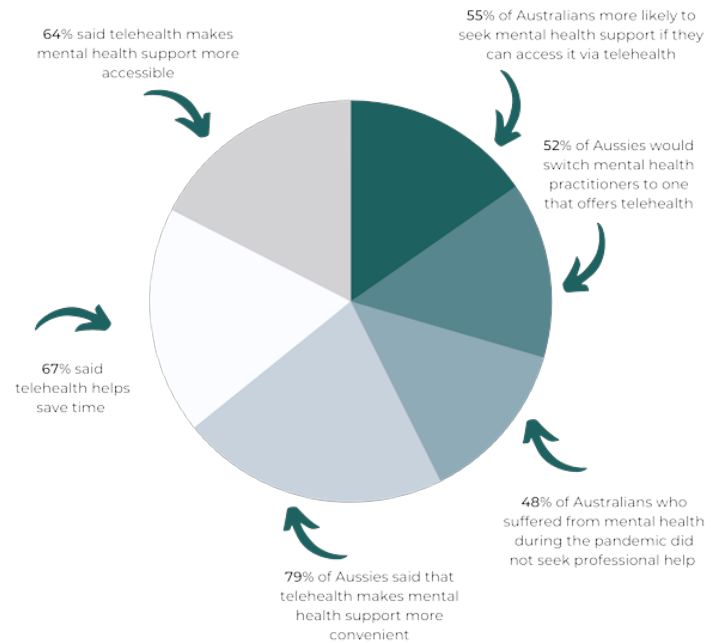
This time, Coviu again agreed to provide me with data to show what the effect of telehealth has been on mental health.

The sad story is still, that whilst many are facing increasing mental health issues, 48% of Australians who suffered from mental health challenges over the past 18 months did not seek professional help. Coviu conducted a survey exploring the attitudes of 1,000 Australians across the country towards the use of telehealth for mental health appointments and the results were fascinating.

It was found that 52% of Aussies would switch mental health practitioners to one that offers telehealth and 55% would be more likely to seek mental health support if they could access it via telehealth. This sentiment is shared across age demographics, from millennials (64.8%) to Gen X (54%) and baby boomers (51%).

It is clear consumers want choice, easier access and convenience, all of which can be offered with telehealth services. Of the respondents, 79% stated that telehealth makes mental health support more convenient, 67% said that it helps save time and 64% said it makes mental health support more accessible.

As the Government continues to build its post-pandemic telehealth strategy, they should take note that Australians want telehealth to be a permanent part of the healthcare system. Telehealth can remove numerous barriers for individuals trying to access healthcare and for mental health practitioners to fully integrate telehealth into their business practices, they need greater certainty that telehealth is going to be viable in the long term.



Through Pureprofile, Coviu conducted a research piece with 1,000 consumers, ages 18-65+ across the Australian general public. <https://www.coviu.com/en/au/>

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(Source: [Coviu](#))

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