Transforming aged care in Australia
Realising the promise of Telehealth

High performance. Delivered.
Australia’s aged care providers face significant and ever increasing pressures. Too few care providers work in rural locations and demand outstrips availability of care, even in major cities. Many providers have shown an interest in using digital technologies to improve the efficiency of their healthcare delivery, and yet they had not made a clear business case for national investment.

"Digital technologies can enable aged care providers to deliver higher quality and more equal services and are a good option for countries like Australia where large geographical distances and a shortage of staff are proving a major problem", Suri Ramanthan, Chair of the Aged Care Industry IT Council (ACIITC) said.

"In addition to this, digital care delivery models can also reduce costs and hospital dependency" – but what would be the optimal model of care and what results could be expected across Australia?

Telehealth is seen as a digital technology with major potential for aged care. Despite this, adoption to date has been limited, a key factor being the lack of supporting infrastructure, funding models and integration to the broader health system.

In early 2013, the Australian government, including the Department of Broadband and the Department of Health, devised a program to investigate how the National Broadband Network ("NBN") could support telehealth technology in Aged Care, Cancer Care and Palliative Care.

**Client profile**

With funding from the NBN-enabled Telehealth Pilots Program¹ Leading Age Services Australia ("LASA") and the ACIITC² began a series of trials with two key aged care providers: Illawarra Retirement Trust ("IRT")³ in New South Wales and Silver Chain⁴ in Western Australia, with Accenture as a strategic partner to the consortium, providing insight into how aged care organisations could measure the benefits of digital telehealth technologies, integrate to the broader health ecosystem and learn lessons to inform any potential larger scale rollout.

**Opportunity**

The consortium’s aim for the project was to test four new models of care and assess how these could be scaled nationally. Accenture drew on its international health experience and deep understanding of digital to define how digital technologies could support Australian aged care and help improve care outcomes.

**Solutions**

Specifically, Accenture helped by:

1. **Aligning digital metrics to business outcomes** – Accenture provided a structured evaluation framework that helped align project and trial metrics with key outcomes. The framework clearly articulated how digital technologies could support aged care services by analysing the data captured throughout the trial.

2. **Assessing the role of other eHealth infrastructure** – Accenture worked to identify how digital and telehealth technology could integrate with wider eHealth initiatives such as the Personally Controlled Electronic Health Record ("PCEHR"). Accenture used its knowledge of the broader eHealth ecosystem to offer guidance on how the aged care industry could use existing infrastructure to deliver new services and augment health records with telehealth data.

3. **Linking strategic planning with execution** – Accenture’s experience in strategy, planning and implementation meant that it could provide LASA with the support it needed at varying phases through the trial. Additionally, Accenture continued to work with ACIITC and LASA to develop an implementation strategy that helped outline how new telehealth service models could potentially be scaled nationally and fit into the broader vision for digital services in the aged care sector.
Results

Accenture’s framework allowed LASA to identify and link key metrics in each service model to agreed business outcomes. This ensured they could clearly quantify the value of the technology through its effect on the four service models to better demonstrate the various benefits for patients and aged care providers.

Specifically, Accenture helped the consortium demonstrate:

1. **Remote monitoring allows aged care providers to better manage chronic conditions and offers a mechanism for early intervention.** While the trial generated 1,577 clinical alerts, only 160 instances were referred to general practitioners, indicating that telehealth nurses could play an active role in identifying problems, before they become critical, helping to reduce the use of more expensive resources such as a hospital.

2. **Video-enabled education consultations enable providers to cost-effectively deliver advice using video conferencing and high-speed broadband.**

3. **Video-enabled medication prompting enables providers to potentially save over $15,000 per year per client by reducing travel costs and improving the productivity of their nursing workforce.**

4. **Monitoring services enable providers to increase healthcare access in rural communities.** By delivering monitoring services to clients in distant geographic locations, providers are able to offer patients better access to new services previously not available in remote areas. In addition, through the use of video conferencing, providers are able to better utilise their workforce by sharing resources with other providers and reducing the need for further investment in resources and technology.

The project helped dispel the idea that aged care consumers are reluctant to adopt digital technology. The trials prompted the collection of over 300,000 data points and 1,600 social interactions, revealing that many clients were keen to use telehealth services to better understand and manage their own care. Overall, patients who participated in the trial were satisfied with the service; 70 percent cited that new technologies helped them identify health problems early and increased their sense of empowerment.

Speaking about Accenture’s work on the project, Suri Ramanthan from the ACIITC said: “Accenture Strategy has proven experience in Australia with a deep knowledge of how to integrate digital offerings into the health industry. We considered them to be a true partner who were particularly flexible and pragmatic and maintained a strong consistency in their quality control and project delivery.”

Service models

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Outcome</th>
<th>Benefit</th>
<th>Remote monitoring</th>
<th>Telephone and video consultation</th>
<th>Video conferencing medication prompts</th>
<th>Access to care providers</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Improved access to healthcare services in the home</td>
<td>Improved access to healthcare services for rural and regional Australians</td>
<td>🌜</td>
<td>🌜</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>🌜</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increased adoption of broadband and technology in delivering health services</td>
<td>🌜</td>
<td>🌜</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>🌜</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved health outcomes for the aged, including their ability to self-manage</td>
<td>Overall satisfaction with the telehealth service</td>
<td>🌜</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improved uptake of self-managed healthcare services</td>
<td>🌜</td>
<td>🌜</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improved quality of life</td>
<td>🌜</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Improved cost efficiencies in the delivery of health services</td>
<td>Reduced dependency on healthcare services</td>
<td>🌜</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>N/A</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Increased workforce utilisation</td>
<td>🌜</td>
<td>🌜</td>
<td>N/A</td>
<td>🌜</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Improved cost effectiveness of health services / reduced healthcare costs</td>
<td>🌜</td>
<td>🌜</td>
<td>🌜</td>
<td>🌜</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>

- High impact
- Medium impact
- Low impact
References

1 Funded by the Australian Government under the National Broadband Network (NBN)Enabled Telehealth Pilots Program.

2 The Aged Care Industry IT Council (ACIITC) was formed by the two industry bodies, the Aged Care Association of Australia (ACAA) and Aged and Community Services Australia (ACSA) and incorporates many providers across Australia.

3 Illawarra Retirement Trust (IRT) – is one of Australia’s largest community based seniors lifestyle and care providers which manage communities in over 30 locations across the Illawarra, South Coast of NSW, Sydney, South East Queensland and Canberra. Source: www.irt.org.au.

4 In 2011, Silver Chain in Western Australia and Royal District Nursing Service in South Australia, merged to become one of Australia’s largest in-home health and care providers. The Group assists more than 74,000 people to remain living in their homes and the community every year. The purpose of the Group is to build community capacity to optimise health and wellbeing. Source: http://www.silverchain.org.au/.

Contact us

For more information, contact:
Leigh Donoghue
Health Industry Lead,
Australia and New Zealand
leigh.donoghue@accenture.com

Christian Nejm
Senior Manager Strategy
christian.nejm@accenture.com

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