

ALLIED HEALTH INDUSTRY REFERENCE GROUP

MEETING FIVE: 14 MARCH 2023 SUMMARY OF OUTCOMES

The Allied Health Industry Reference Group (AHIRG) held its fifth meeting on 14 March 2023.

The topics covered in the meeting included:

- An update on digital health activities under way in the allied health sector, with presentations provided by KPMG Australia and Allied Health Professions Australia (AHPA).
 - KPMG provided an update on a scoping study they are undertaking of behalf of the Department of Health and Aged Care (the Department), which is analysing barriers to adopting digital health tools, in particular clinical information systems that are conformant with My Health Record (MHR), among allied health professionals.
 - AHPA presented on their work with the Australian Digital Health Agency (ADHA), focusing on the use of the MHR system by allied health professionals. This has included the development of an allied health event summary that could be uploaded into MHR, noting it can only be uploaded in PDF form. AHPA are also contributing to a classification project that is being run by ADHA, which is mapping documents that could be included in MHR.
 - Discussions between AHIRG members highlighted the need for:
 - Consumers to be a primary concern during consultations, particularly regarding ways to improve engagement and understanding of how their information can be used and accessed.
 - Any improvements to the uptake of digital tools needs to be applied to the entire healthcare system, to take advantage of their benefits.
- The Conjoint Allied Health Professors, joined by representatives of the University of Sydney, gave a demonstration of the newly developed Occasions of Care Explained and Analysed (OCEAN) tool which has evolved from the Bettering the Evaluation of Care and Health (BEACH) project. This tool provides a reliable, reproducible model for collecting data from healthcare professions across Australia. It was first created for GPs and general practice nurses and has potential to be expanded for use by allied health professionals. The Conjoint Professors sought AHIRG members' opinions on priorities and requirements for a proposed allied health expansion. Discussion on this item highlighted:
 - The need to align the OCEAN data with existing best-practice datasets and quality of care frameworks.
 - That the diversity within allied health means trials could start with a broad focus, and then use bespoke questions to narrow in on professions, sectors or conditions.
 - The need for a minimum dataset that can be compared across allied health professions.

- The Department led a discussion on primary care reform, with a focus on the recently released Strengthening Medicare Taskforce report. The purpose of this item was to seek the AHIRG's feedback on the report, including the allied health sector's priorities and suggestions for future reform. This discussion highlighted that:
 - Reforms affecting multidisciplinary teams should support practitioners to maintain their own relevant networks, rather than impose new ones.
 - All practitioners need to have a clear scope of practice to encourage cooperation and improve communication and understanding within multidisciplinary teams. Governance processes are important.
 - There needs to be greater education for the public on how the health system functions and how to access allied health services.
 - The sector should look to successful models of multidisciplinary care, such as through Aboriginal Community Controlled Health Organisations, when considering primary care reform.

- The next AHIRG meeting will be held in June 2023, with topics including a discussion on the role of allied health assistants, and allied health student clinical placements. This meeting may be held in person, dependant on member availability.

NEXT STEPS:

1. AHPA and the Department will provide updates on their digital health projects at later AHIRG meetings as these projects progress.
2. The Department will facilitate further contact between the University of Sydney, AHPA, and NAHAC to discuss existing allied health datasets and ways to engage allied health professionals in the development of the OCEAN tool.
3. The Department will seek examples from members on allied health professionals working at the top of their scope of practice, which will be published in future editions of the Chief Allied Health Officer newsletter.
4. The Department will seek case studies from members that highlight models of multidisciplinary teams and allied health-led care that have been successful.
5. Members to advise the Department whether they are able to attend the next AHIRG meeting in-person.
6. Members to advise the Department of other topics they would like discussed in future meetings.