

March 2025

Hon. Simeon Brown,  
Minister of Health  
Private Bag 18888  
Parliament Buildings  
Wellington 6160

Dear Minister

On behalf of the [New Zealand Telehealth Forum](#) we extend our warmest congratulations on your appointment as Minister of Health. We are excited about the opportunities that lie ahead and are eager to collaborate with you to revolutionize healthcare delivery in New Zealand through the power of telehealth.

Telehealth, often referred to as "virtual care," is the delivery of healthcare using digital technology, bridging the gap between patients and providers separated by time and/or distance. This innovative approach includes video consultations, phone calls, text messages, emails, and the transfer of radiologic images, among other technologies. The potential of telehealth to transform our healthcare system is immense, and we are committed to making this vision a reality.

The New Zealand Telehealth Forum is the expert advisory group to Health New Zealand and the Ministry of Health. For over a decade, we have been at the forefront of championing the integration of digital technology into healthcare with the goal to improve access to healthcare and the matching of capacity with demand. Our vision is clear:

*Telehealth will be embedded across the health sector as a sustainable way to deliver healthcare in New Zealand.*

Our forum comprises healthcare sector leaders, including clinicians, professional colleges, health administrators, ICT experts, and health equity advocates. Together, we coordinate thought leadership and provide invaluable advice on telehealth implementation.

## Financial Advantages of Telehealth

Telehealth offers significant financial advantages by reducing the need for physical infrastructure and enabling more efficient use of healthcare resources. Remote patient monitoring and teleconsultations can decrease hospital admissions and emergency department visits, leading to substantial cost savings with an estimated \$2.5M per 40 bed "virtual ward", based on this [NHS virtual ward evaluation](#). A recent New Zealand study has found that 23,000 patients avoid an Emergency Department visit a year in the Midlands area, simply by calling Healthline, saving roughly 17 million dollars per annum. Additionally, telehealth can improve workforce efficiency by allowing healthcare providers to manage larger patient volumes and reduce travel time and costs.

## Current State

Over the past four years, the use of digital technology to deliver healthcare has grown significantly. The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the growth of digital technology, leading to increased use of telehealth. Research indicates that overcoming interoperability challenges with clear strategic direction supported by strong formal clinical leadership is key to successful telehealth and virtual care adoption. Private and primary healthcare providers have excelled in embracing telehealth and virtual care models. However a [public hospital stocktake](#) in 2023 revealed poor uptake, with a lack of strategy and momentum to scale services.

In 2022, our Leadership Group, in consultation with the broader health sector developed a concept paper on the **Patient Anywhere, Clinician Elsewhere** model of care. This paper outlines the sector's views on the benefits and barriers to developing "virtual hospital" type models and makes several key recommendations. PACE offers a feasible model of modern health care delivery supported by digital tools and an opportunity to alleviate acute care pressure on emergency departments, supporting early access to outpatient care and supporting community and home-based care reducing demand on in hospital care by:

- Matching of capacity and demand across regions and nationally
- Improving access to healthcare for underserved and priority populations.
- Avoiding delays in diagnosis and treatment, meeting healthcare delivery targets.
- Providing choice in how, when, and where patients receive healthcare.
- Supporting services in embedding telehealth to achieve Pae Ora.
- Enabling all healthcare workers to work to the top of their scope and access expert opinions.

In 2024, we developed new guidance on Remote Patient Monitoring to support healthcare providers in designing and implementing telemonitoring service capabilities. This year we have mapped the PACE model with RPM (RPM@PACE) which is currently under expert consultation and will be released later this month. This model advocates integration of care utilising patient experience and devices to support community models such as Hospital in The Home (HiTH).

*For a summary of our earlier work, please refer to our 2022 Funder report or visit our website at [www.telehealth.org.nz](http://www.telehealth.org.nz)*

## Future Opportunities

To drive high-quality telehealth as a core component of healthcare, our findings suggest that now is the time to create a robust strategy for the use of Telehealth/Virtual Care across primary, community, and public health delivery. The Telehealth Forum is here to help, and we welcome the opportunity to meet with you to discuss the financial and health benefits of telehealth.

Yours sincerely,

**Dr. Ruth Large**

*New Zealand Telehealth Forum Chair*

### Quick links:

[View PACE Document](#)

[View Funder Report](#)

[NZ Telehealth Website](#)

