



**WHITE PAPER**

Humanising healthcare:  
understanding  
patient experience



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### **Acknowledgment of Country**

CFEP Surveys is committed to supporting reconciliation among Indigenous, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples and non-Indigenous Australian people.

We acknowledge the Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples as the Traditional Custodians of the lands and waters. We pay respect to Elders – past, present and emerging – and acknowledge the important role Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples continue to play within our community.

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## FORWARD

Since its inception in 1995, CFEP Surveys has been at the forefront of enhancing healthcare through Patient-Reported Measures (PRMs), pioneering efforts that have significantly contributed to the evolution of patient-centred care in Australia. Our journey began nearly 30 years ago, at a time when the concept of leveraging patient feedback to drive improvements in healthcare quality was still in its infancy.

Today, we are proud to stand at the helm of this evolution, having partnered with over 20,000 healthcare providers across various settings, ranging from small and corporate practices to tertiary care institutions, community health facilities, Local Health Districts, and Primary Health Networks, in delivering insights through millions of validated paper-based and electronic PRMs, including Patient-Reported Experience Measures (PREMs) and Patient-Reported Outcome Measures (PROMs).

As we navigate the ever-evolving landscape of healthcare, we are met with significant challenges, including an ageing population, the prevalence of chronic conditions, and the distinct barriers faced by

underrepresented groups in accessing high-quality care. These complexities, amplified by the constraints on healthcare budgets, underscore the urgency of adopting innovative solutions in care delivery. It is heartening to witness the nation embarking on critical conversations about elevating patient experiences within our healthcare frameworks, with a concerted effort to weave individual needs, preferences, and values into the fabric of decision-making and service delivery. This paradigm shift, from aspirational ideals to a recognised consumer right, is gaining momentum, with increasing reinforcement from policies and standards. In this environment, PRMs have emerged as essential tools, providing a voice to patients and illuminating paths to understand and enhance the patient experience and outcomes.

The federal government's national health reform agenda including Australia's Primary Health Care 10 Year Plan lays a solid foundation for strategic reform built around the vision of optimising health system performance towards achieving the Quintuple Aim. This vision champions the delivery of patient-focused, multidisciplinary care, aiming to enrich the care experience, improve health outcomes for Australians, increase the cost-efficiency of the health system, and better the work life of healthcare providers. The burgeoning support from health professionals, consumer organisations, and peak bodies, alongside other stakeholders, marks the beginning of a collaborative journey towards realising this vision and co-creating this mutually beneficial future. Achieving this requires our collective dedication to deepen the discourse on person-centred care, exploring its seamless integration across the healthcare continuum.

Over the last two decades, my journey as an academic, policy advisor, and senior executive has been deeply rooted in championing person-centred models of care that prioritise the unique needs of patients and co-creating health. At the core of this advocacy lies the empowerment of patients to actively share their care experiences. Their invaluable feedback serves as a catalyst, enabling us to proactively refine the quality of care, bridge the gap between intentions and real-life experiences, and

position patients as core partners in their health journey.

It is with great enthusiasm that I present this whitepaper, *Humanising healthcare: understanding patient experience*. It explores the critical role of patient experience in healthcare—highlighting the significance of PRMs in bridging the gap between healthcare delivery and patient expectations, the challenges faced, and how to effectively capture and leverage this critical data to improve patient engagement, experiences, and outcomes. Additionally, it showcases compelling case studies from Australian healthcare practices, providing concrete examples of how patient feedback drives ongoing enhancements in care quality and safety, underscoring the transformative power of Patient Reported Measures (PRMs).

As CFEP Surveys continues to advocate for person-centred care and the pivotal role of PRMs in improving healthcare experiences and outcomes, we invite you to join us in this vital partnership. Together, we can advance healthcare reform and elevate the standard of patient care across Australia.

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**Dr Tina Janamian**

AGPAL Group, Chief Executive Officer  
Adj Associate Professor, University of Queensland

## INTRODUCTION

Patients are central to the delivery of healthcare both as the object of that care and also as participants and guides for that care. With rising expectations about how care should be experienced, Australia has a challenge to incorporate patient experience into healthcare systems. Every interaction in the healthcare system, from start to finish, shapes and defines the patient's journey. These touchpoints offer insights into the qualitative aspects of care.

This white paper offers insights on understanding, measuring and improving patient experience. A positive patient experience is essential for better health outcomes and higher patient engagement. It has also been shown to have positive financial implications across the entire healthcare system. Real-world case studies from [Inala Primary Care](#), [ForHealth Group](#) and [Camp Hill Healthcare](#) highlight best practices. The consequences of ignoring patient experience are also discussed.

## AUSTRALIAN CONTEXT

Australia's commitment to improving patient experience is occurring across national and state borders. It reflects growing commitment to providing person-centred, culturally sensitive and accessible care that empowers individuals to actively participate in their health journey. Such approaches have been shown to result in improved health outcomes. Noteworthy elements of current frameworks that emphasise patient experience include:

**National Safety and Quality Health Service (NSQHS) Standards:** These standards embrace person-centred care, emphasising consumer partnerships, effective communication and shared healthcare decision-making. These standards prioritise engaging patients in their care journey, enhancing their overall experience.

**Value-based health care (VBHC):** This is an evidence-based, person-centred approach to enhance healthcare decisions and drive system transformation. Prioritising value over volume shifts focus to sustainability and outcomes. This improves the care experience and health outcomes for patients, and benefits service providers, communities, health professionals and the broader population.

**Consumer participation:** Healthcare organisations are increasingly involving patients in governance, quality improvement and decision-making processes. This ensures patients' perspectives and preferences are integrated into healthcare delivery, resulting in a more person-centric approach.

**Equity agenda:** Adoption of the Quintuple Aim means that Australia's multicultural population and indigenous peoples are being deliberately considered in health service planning. The poor health outcomes for those same groups underscore the importance of further developing cultural competence in healthcare.

**Medicare:** Medicare, Australia's public health insurance, operates alongside the Pharmaceutical Benefits Scheme and is cemented as a universal health insurance model aimed at sustaining a high quality, highly efficient approach to accessible healthcare.

**MyMedicare:** The recent introduction of enrolment through MyMedicare means that health players will attempt to build relationships with patients to extend continuity of care and overcome care fragmentation. While funding for MyMedicare initiatives will unfold in stages, the aim of the program is to formalise the patient-primary care relationship.

**My Health Record:** Australia has introduced the My Health Record system, allowing patients to access their health information online. This initiative empowers individuals to take an active role in managing their healthcare, fostering greater control and participation.

**Telehealth:** COVID-19 fast-tracked telehealth adoption in Australia. This digital transformation provides people with more convenient access to healthcare services, effectively reducing geographical barriers and enhancing overall patient experience.

**Patient experience surveys:** The Australian Government actively promotes the use of patient experience surveys, recognising that gathering patient feedback through surveys is an essential tool for ongoing quality improvement and ensuring care remains person-centred.

Together, these approaches challenge Australian healthcare providers to build enduring partnerships with patients. Reporting on the Quintuple Aim of Health (improved patient experience, improved provider experience, improved population health, sustainable healthcare and health equity) has been slow in Australia. However, the value of this approach in supporting transformation in care is being recognised and more health providers are reviewing their operations through the lens of the Quintuple Aim.

Noteworthy government and stakeholder strategies include:

- [Future focused primary health care: Australia's Primary Health Care 10 Year Plan 2022-2032](#)
- [Delivering Better Care for Patients: The AMA 10-year Framework for Primary Care Reform](#)
- [Medical Board of Australian Professional Performance Framework](#)
- [Australian Government Department of Health National Preventative Health Strategy 2021-2030](#)
- [Self-care for Health: A National Policy Blueprint](#)
- [Australian Government Department of Health Australia's Long Term National Health Plan](#)
- [Vision 2030 Blueprint for Mental Health and Suicide Prevention in Australia](#)
- [Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing National Strategic Framework for Chronic Conditions](#)
- [2020-25 Addendum to the National Health Reform Agreement](#)
- [Strengthening Medicare Taskforce Report December 2022](#)

Despite serious system failures and the findings of the Royal Commissions into aged care and the disability sector, and ongoing challenges in providing equitable patient experiences for Indigenous, multicultural and rural populations, there is national and organisational commitment to address these disparities and enhance patient experiences.

# WHAT IS PATIENT EXPERIENCE?

## DEFINING PATIENT EXPERIENCE

No single globally accepted definition of 'patient experience' exists. It can best be described as a patient's perception of their care.

Patient experience is a multifaceted concept that represents the entirety of a patient's journey through the healthcare system, encompassing all interactions that contribute to shaping the patient's experience – including clinical, administrative, emotional and physical elements.

Understanding patient experience in Australian healthcare is improved by linking it with data around person-centred care and the Quintuple Aim.

**Person-centred care:** Patient experience is inherently intertwined with the concept of person-centred care, which places the patient at the heart of the healthcare process. This approach emphasises an individual's unique needs, preferences and values. Person-centred care seeks to respect these principles by involving patients in decision-making, designing care plans that align with their health goals and recognising the importance of cultural sensitivities. The aim is collaborative healthcare with patients, carers and families, promoting engagement and shared decision-making.

**Quintuple Aim:** The Quintuple Aim provides a comprehensive improvement blueprint for Australian healthcare. This framework builds upon the original Triple Aim (patient experience, enhancing population health and reducing costs) and the Quadruple Aim

(which incorporated the wellbeing of healthcare providers) to introduce the pursuit of health equity. These additional facets emphasise the imperative to create a person-centred environment, supportive of healthcare professionals and dedicated to ensuring equal health outcomes for all, regardless of socio-economic or cultural background. The concept of patient experience remains pivotal within this enlarged scope. A healthcare system where patients and their carers and families feel heard, respected and satisfied is more likely to foster a positive work environment for providers, enhancing healthcare quality and safety.

The [Australian Institute for Health and Welfare \(AIHW\)](#) reports annually on [Patient Experiences in Australia](#).

## COMPONENTS OF PATIENT EXPERIENCE

**Effective communication:** This requires clear, honest and empathetic dialogue between patients and providers. It's crucial to listen actively to patients, address their concerns and explain their treatment in terms they can easily grasp. More advanced concepts of improved provider-patient communication include educating providers to enable tailored communication based on the patient's level of activation, as explored in [Better health: the power of patient activation](#).





**Care coordination:** This entails the seamless exchange of information and collaboration among healthcare teams. As described in the [AIHW Coordination of health care: experiences of information sharing between providers for patients](#), safe and high quality healthcare depends on sharing of health information between healthcare providers. While the goal is ensuring every step of a patient’s healthcare journey is well-integrated for the best possible outcomes, significant gaps exist.

**Physical environment:** The setting where care is delivered plays a significant part in a patient’s perception. Aspects like cleanliness, accessibility and comfort of healthcare facilities are essential and can greatly enhance patients’ overall perception of their healthcare experience.

**Empathy and emotional support:** Catering to patients’ emotional and psychological wellbeing is equally important to addressing their physical needs. Recognising and attending to the fears, anxieties and emotional requirements of patients and their families or caregivers is essential.

**Access and convenience:** This encompasses the ease with which patients can schedule appointments, access care and obtain information. Efforts such as reducing waiting times, streamlining administrative tasks and ensuring a smooth transition between different stages of care or healthcare settings significantly elevate patient experience.

**Families and carers:** Central to the provision of compassionate and comprehensive care are the experiences of families and carers, especially where age and capacity of the patient are relevant. Their involvement is not just supplementary but often their insights, support and active participation can significantly influence patient outcomes and satisfaction. Therefore, to enhance patient care it’s crucial to incorporate families’ and carers’ experiences into healthcare strategies.

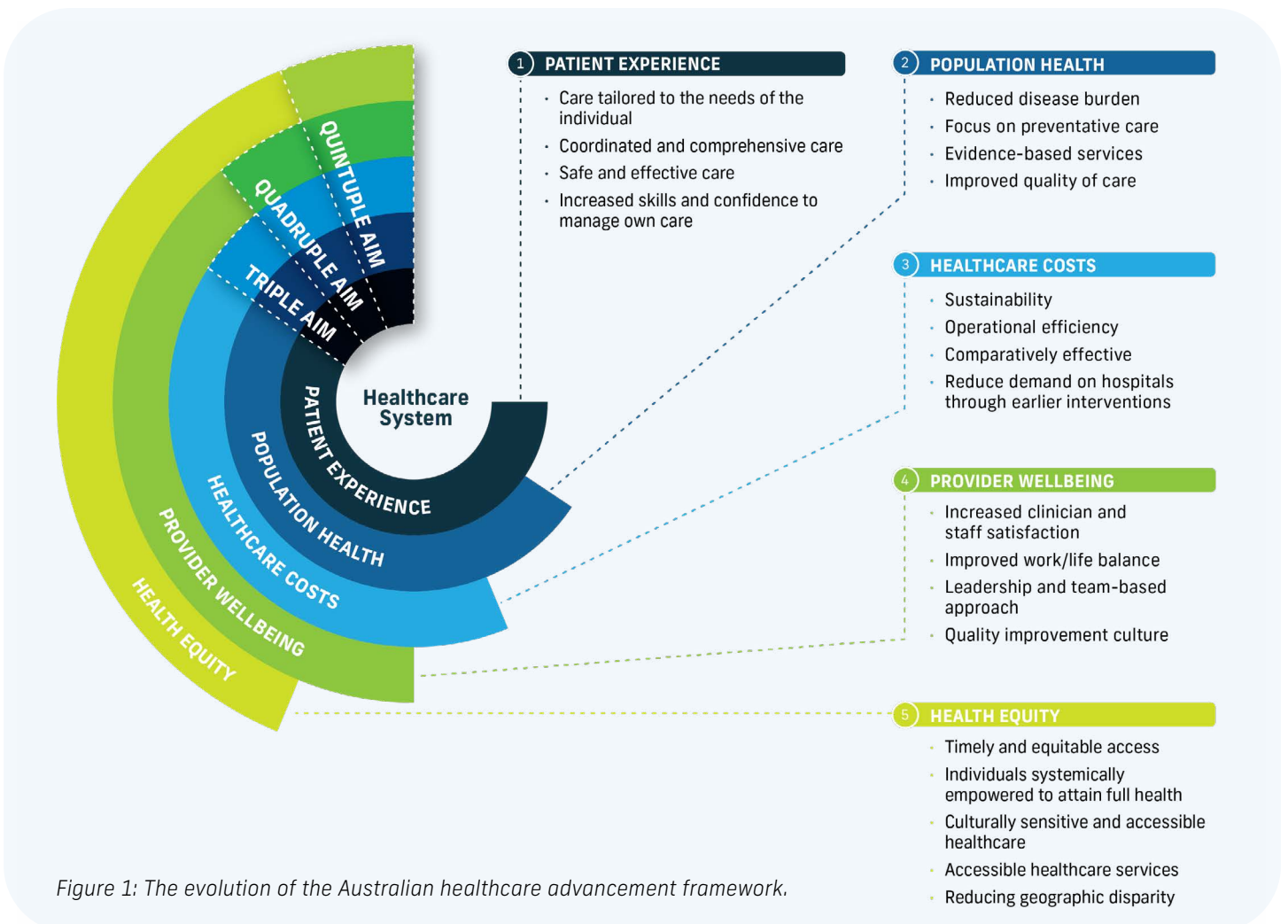


Figure 1: The evolution of the Australian healthcare advancement framework.



## Case study |

# Insights from Inala Primary Care: best practice patient experience

### INTRODUCTION

**Since 2007, Inala Primary Care in Brisbane's southwest has been committed to exceptional patient experiences through personalised, comprehensive care. Catering to a diverse demographic of 148 ethnicities, the practice has focused on a tailored approach, significantly informed by patient feedback, to meet varied patient needs effectively.**

### THE IMPORTANCE OF PATIENT EXPERIENCE

Inala Primary Care's definition of exceptional patient care goes beyond traditional customer service. It's about deeply understanding each patient's background, goals, and needs, leading to trust-based interactions and reduced waiting times. The centre aims to create a calming environment, recognising patients' fears and uncertainties, especially those related to health and finances. Inala Primary Care CEO Tracey Johnson explains that in a social housing community with a significant history of migration (even within Queensland of Indigenous and Islander populations) and humanitarian settlement, providing care that is trauma-informed and culturally safe is paramount.

### VALUING PATIENT FEEDBACK

Patient feedback is vital in evaluating and enhancing Inala Primary Care's services. The practice actively incorporates patient input into its decision-making, ensuring a patient-centred approach. Various feedback methods, such as surveys, online forms, suggestion boxes, text messages and an open-door policy, facilitate this process. Patients are routinely involved in co-designing models of care and evaluating new initiatives. They will soon be given a new voice through the creation of a permanent Patient Advisory Committee reporting to the Clinical Governance Committee and Board. This feedback is crucial in advocating for service improvements and new funding. Advocacy is an important area of work for the practice given the community experiences higher rates of chronic conditions and greater utilisation of healthcare services than state and national benchmarks.

### IMPACT OF FEEDBACK ON QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

Feedback has been vital in aligning patient care with financial and logistical considerations. Inala Primary Care has a strong emphasis on continuous quality improvement, allocating clinical time each month to reviewing data and coordinating quality improvement activities. The use of patient feedback to inform quality improvement priorities and tease out areas for change is a constant part of the team's quality agenda. Services have been started and pilots even discontinued based on feedback obtained in the early phases of change projects.

### SUCCESSFUL INITIATIVES

Tracey describes the team's most successful initiative for improving the patient experience to date as undertaking a patient experience survey and following through on the feedback. For example, the feedback prompted the centre to investigate staffing ratios in the reception team that needed to be scaled proportionately to support the growing practice. This feedback helped shape the creation of new roles in the reception team and identified opportunities to improve processes and procedures.

### FUTURE DIRECTIONS

The practice has launched several initiatives for better patient outcomes, including the Patient Journey Mapping project, which aims to audit and improve every aspect of a patient's experience. Studies on specific care models complement this effort, reflecting a dedication to ongoing enhancement.

### CONCLUSION

Inala Primary Care's journey in prioritising patient experience demonstrates the transformative power of patient feedback. The practice's commitment to understanding and addressing patient concerns has fostered a culture of continuous improvement, ensuring the care provided not only meets but exceeds patient expectations.

# IMPORTANCE OF PATIENT EXPERIENCE

## HEALTH OUTCOMES

Patient experience significantly influences outcomes beyond just measuring satisfaction. Positive patient experiences are intricately linked to better health outcomes. When patients feel heard, respected and valued by their healthcare providers, they are more likely to adhere to treatment plans, follow medical advice and engage in healthier behaviours. The link between patient experience and health outcomes is especially evident in chronic disease management and long-term care.

Patient self-management, underpinned by health literacy, patient activation and healthcare team support, is crucial for enhancing health outcomes. Empowering patients as partners in their health fosters informed decision-making and effective condition management. Through education, personalised communication and continuous support, patients are equipped to navigate their health journey successfully. This empowerment leads to better quality of life, adherence to treatment plans and reduced healthcare costs. Please read our white paper [Patient activation: supporting people to manage their health and wellbeing](#) for a detailed look at this subject.

## PATIENT SATISFACTION

Patient satisfaction is a crucial dimension of patient experience. Satisfied patients are more likely to adhere to treatment plans and experience better health outcomes, but they also become advocates for the healthcare facility and individual practitioners. They are more inclined to recommend the facility to others, contributing to increased referrals. Such word-of-mouth endorsements are instrumental in attracting new patients and enhancing the reputation of healthcare providers.

## CLINICIAN AND STAFF SATISFACTION

The ripple effects of a positive patient experience extend to the very professionals providing care. The [Institute for Healthcare Improvement \(IHI\) framework](#)

[for Improving Joy in Work](#) recognises the impact healthcare professionals have on the success of healthcare delivery. A smooth and rewarding patient experience correlates with higher morale among healthcare staff. When patients are content and the care trajectory runs without hitches, healthcare professionals are shielded from undue stress. This results in lower burnout rates and greater job satisfaction, creating a better work environment for professional growth and patient wellbeing.

## FINANCIAL IMPLICATIONS

On a micro level, organisations can financially benefit from improved patient experience through higher patient retention and market share. On a macro level, system-wide improved patient engagement significantly impacts financial and population health. As the healthcare paradigm shifts towards Value-Based Health Care (VBHC) models, patient experience and person-centred care become central drivers for improving financial outcomes and the sustainability of the healthcare system. However, as described in the [Deeble Institute for Health Policy Research, The Value Based Health Care Landscape Perspective Brief](#), due to the complex healthcare landscape in Australia, many elements will need to align for VBHC to be successfully implemented at a large scale.

## COMPLIANCE, COMPLAINTS AND LITIGATION RISK

There's a significant link between patient satisfaction and reduced complaints or litigation risks. A contented patient is less predisposed to file complaints or malpractice claims. Beyond compliance, this is the additional value of the [voice of the patient](#), transparent communication, evident empathy and the depth of the patient-provider relationship. Organisations and individuals can reduce potential complaints or legal challenges by ensuring patients are well-informed, feel empathised with and share a bond of trust with their healthcare providers.



Figure 2: Benefits attached to the voice of the patient.

# CHALLENGES IN PATIENT EXPERIENCE

## COMMUNICATION

Effective communication is vital for high quality healthcare and patient satisfaction. Communication breakdowns can have profound consequences on patient experience. Misunderstandings and a lack of clarity in conveying medical information can lead to dissatisfaction, lower engagement and, in the worst cases, medical errors.

**Language barriers:** Patients with limited English proficiency may struggle with medical instructions or expressing concerns. Providers should offer interpreters, translations or advocates to bridge cultural and language gaps.

**Information overload:** Sometimes, providers may overwhelm patients with complex medical jargon. This can lead to confusion, anxiety and frustration, undermining patient experience. It is most likely to occur when patients are frail or so unwell that their ability to digest information is impaired.

**Mismatched expectations:** Effective communication includes setting realistic expectations. When patients have unrealistic hopes about their treatment outcomes or recovery, unmet expectations can lead to disappointment and dissatisfaction.

## ACCESS TO CARE

Access to healthcare services is a fundamental aspect of patient experience. Barriers like long wait times or geographical disparities hinder patient experience. Efforts to improve access to care include telehealth services, mobile clinics and community health programs tailored to address specific geographical and financial barriers.

**Geographical disparities:** In a vast country like Australia, geographical disparities can create significant access challenges. Patients in remote, rural and regional areas may face long travel times and limited healthcare options, impacting their overall experience.

**Wait times:** Excessive wait times for appointments, tests or procedures can be frustrating and detrimental to patient experience. Patients want timely care and long delays accessing or while attending care can erode their confidence in the healthcare system and sense of self.

**Financial barriers:** Financial constraints can hinder care access. In Australia, where patients may bear a portion of healthcare costs, financial barriers can lead to delays in seeking care, negatively impacting patient experience and outcomes as highlighted in [the OECD health care quality and outcomes indicators, Australia 2022–23](#).

## HEALTHCARE INEQUITY AND INEQUALITY

Healthcare inequalities pose a significant challenge to achieving an equitable patient experience. As explored in the [AIHW Health inequalities in Australia: morbidity, health behaviours, risk factors and health service use report](#), while the health of the Australian population improved markedly during the twentieth century, gains have not been equally shared and considerable health-related inequalities still exist. Addressing these disparities is fundamental to improving patient experience for all.

**Indigenous health inequities:** Indigenous Australians face health inequities from historical and socioeconomic factors. These disparities include higher rates of chronic conditions, reduced life expectancy and barriers to accessing culturally competent care. The Australian Department of Health and Aged Care [Status and determinants of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health](#) report that the burden of disease for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people is 2.3 times that of non-Indigenous Australians. Improving the social and cultural determinants of health is a key part of work to improve health outcomes, meaning that programs, policies and services need to move beyond physical and medical health and include the social determinants and cultural determinants of health.

The Australian Government has recently made several new commitments to narrow the health outcome disparities between First Nations people and non-Indigenous Australians. This includes training 500 additional First Nations health workers and making significant investments in vital health services like dialysis and rheumatic heart disease treatments. Aimed at fighting chronic diseases and enhancing care access, this strategy emphasises collaboration with community-controlled health services. This comprehensive approach marks a critical advancement towards correcting longstanding inequalities in First Nations communities, signifying a key movement towards fair healthcare in Australia.

**Multicultural health inequities:** Australia's rich cultural diversity underscores the need for a healthcare system that is inclusive and accessible to all. The [Australian Institute of Health and Welfare \(AIHW\)](#) reports people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds face greater challenges when dealing with the health and welfare system. Language barriers, lower health literacy, and difficulties navigating an unfamiliar system put them at greater risk of poorer quality healthcare, service delivery and poorer health outcomes compared with other Australians. Enhancing support for these communities will improve their healthcare experiences and outcomes.

**Developing cultural competence:** To address healthcare disparities, providers should develop cultural competence. This involves understanding the cultural values and practices of Indigenous and ethnic populations and tailoring care to respect and incorporate these factors. The Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW) [Cultural safety in health care for Indigenous Australians: monitoring framework](#), for example, looks at different dimensions of cultural safety, including modules on culturally respectful healthcare services, patient experience of health care, and access to health care services.

**Equitable resource allocation:** Ensuring healthcare resources are allocated equitably to all communities is essential. This includes addressing workforce shortages in rural, remote and regional areas and improving access to necessary healthcare services. People living in rural and remote areas have higher rates of hospitalisations, deaths, and injury and also have poorer access to and use of primary healthcare services than people living in major cities. In the complex landscape of primary healthcare accessibility, for example, [Medicare claims data from 2021–22 show a tale of disparity](#). The data reveals that individuals in remote and very remote communities face significant challenges in accessing general practitioner services, with the number of GP visits per person being notably lower compared with more urbanised areas.

The [Australian Government Access and Equity Policy](#) is part of a broad range of efforts by the government to provide funding for services that recognise and embrace diversity. The Access and Equity Policy asks providers to reduce barriers for vulnerable Australians and ensure diversity is not a barrier for people engaging with government-funded services.







## Case study |

# Insights from ForHealth: enhancing patient experience through practice accreditation

### INTRODUCTION

**ForHealth is committed to empowering independent health practitioners to provide quality, accessible healthcare for all Australians. Their innovative business model supports independent health practitioners across disciplines, promoting integrated and quality care to improve patient outcomes.**

### PRIORITISING PATIENT EXPERIENCE

Focused on accessible healthcare and integrated services, particularly in low socioeconomic areas, the ForHealth model aims to ensure patients receive timely and comprehensive care, addressing their immediate and long-term health needs. ForHealth's approach to patient experience is built on its effective use of patient feedback, and underpinned by the rigorous Australian General Practice Accreditation process.

Caroline Kovacic, ForHealth Incentives Program Manager, describes the organisation's leadership and structure as fostering a culture of local autonomy, enabling practice managers and teams to adapt and respond to the unique needs of their communities to enhance their patient experience.

### ACCREDITATION AS A PARTNERSHIP

Brad Fischer, ForHealth Regional Manager–Victoria, admits the accreditation process can be daunting for some due to the complex standards and criteria involved. However, ForHealth's decentralised setup provides a network of support while still enabling practices to respond to site-specific concerns.

ForHealth's experience with accreditation also underscores the important role of service providers in navigating the complexities of accreditation. Recounting an instance where one centre faced significant staff turnover just weeks out from the accreditation deadline, Brad credits CFEP Surveys for invaluable support in managing a stressful situation, highlighting that effective internal and external partnerships are crucial in overcoming challenges when they arise.

### IMPACT OF FEEDBACK ON QUALITY IMPROVEMENT

Central to ForHealth's operational excellence is the use of patient feedback in identifying issues and improvement opportunities. The organisation's commitment to incorporating patient feedback into its continuous improvement processes enables both organisation-wide and targeted site-specific initiatives that directly enhance patient experience.

Caroline explains how one significant quality improvement initiative was driven by patient feedback highlighting concerns about staff interactions. ForHealth used this opportunity to implement a customer service training program across the organisation.

### REWARDING ASPECTS

The feedback loop has been rewarding for the ForHealth staff, particularly in validating the effectiveness of their patient care strategies and accreditation efforts. The organisation's success in improving patient experiences through targeted initiatives has increased patient and staff satisfaction, underscoring the value of a feedback-driven approach.

Caroline says staff especially value the patient feedback reports. Everyone likes to see how their practice is doing, and on the front page of the report they'll get a result that says, *'92% of respondents rated this practice overall as good, very good or excellent'*, for example. It's gratifying for them to hear that patients think they are doing well or that their service and care have improved since their last round of patient feedback surveys.

### FUTURE DIRECTIONS

ForHealth's patient-centred approach continues to evolve, focusing on expanding services like urgent care and developing niche offerings such as Evoca Women's Health. These developments reflect the organisation's dedication to meeting the diverse needs of its patient population, adapting to the changing healthcare landscape and addressing particular areas of interest for their clinicians.

# MEASURING PATIENT EXPERIENCE

## NET PROMOTER SCORE (NPS)

The Net Promoter Score (NPS) is a widely used metric across all consumer markets to assess satisfaction and loyalty. Developed by [Fred Reichheld](#), the NPS gauges consumers' likelihood to recommend services. This provides insights into how likely consumers are to recommend a healthcare provider or facility to others. The typical NPS question asks the likelihood of recommending a service on a 0–10 scale.

In the healthcare system, the advantages of the NPS lie in its simplicity. Benchmarking within the sector and against others, and using the score to gauge patient loyalty, is beneficial.

When combined with other patient feedback methods, the NPS can contribute to a holistic approach to enhancing patient experience.

## QUANTITATIVE FEEDBACK

Quantitative patient feedback is a systematic approach to collecting and analysing numerical data, and it plays a vital role in providing objective and measurable insights into quality of care, clinical outcomes and the overall patient journey.

Quantitative feedback involves structured surveys, questionnaires or standardised scales, each designed to gather specific information and numerical responses. This data is typically categorised and analysed to reveal patterns, trends, benchmarks and statistically significant findings.

The key traits of quantitative feedback include measurability, objectivity, statistical analysis, consistency, and industry benchmarking. Quantitative patient feedback enables healthcare professionals to [identify areas for improvement](#), set performance targets and measure that data over time.

## QUALITATIVE FEEDBACK

Qualitative patient feedback involves patients sharing their experiences and perspectives in their own words. This can be done through surveys, focus groups, designation websites such as [Care Opinion](#), interviews or other forms of communication.

Qualitative patient feedback provides a detailed and nuanced understanding of patients' experiences. Unlike NPS or rating-style feedback, which provides a numeric score, qualitative feedback captures patients' opinions, feelings and perceptions. This type of feedback can provide insights into specific areas of improvement, uncover issues that quantitative methods may miss and reveal underlying reasons for patients' experiences.

For example, patients may rate their experience as a 7 out of 10. Without further information, it is difficult to determine what led to that rating or how to improve. However, if the patient is asked to provide qualitative feedback, they may explain they had difficulty understanding their treatment plan or felt rushed during their appointment. The information can then be used to improve patient communication or adjust scheduling practices to allow for more time with each patient.



Quantitative patient feedback	Qualitative patient feedback
<b>What is it?</b>	
Numerical and statistical data	Descriptive and narrative data
Larger sample size	Small sample size
Provides objective information	Provides subjective and nuanced information
<b>Uses</b>	
Easier to analyse and compare across different groups or time periods	More thoughtful analysis required due to the richness and complexity of the data
Great for benchmarking and monitoring whether something is working or not working	Great for figuring out why something is working or not working
Provides prevalence and frequency data and insights around certain patient issues or experiences	Provides insights into the context, emotions and personal stories behind certain issues or experiences
Can be useful for identifying time-sensitive issues for which improvement initiatives can be actioned quickly and easily	Can be useful to gain a deeper understanding of patient perspectives and uncover new insights for improvement
<b>Methods</b>	
NPS scores, customer satisfaction scores, star and numerical ratings	Verbal and written feedback, testimonials
Frequency of complaints or the percentage of patients who would recommend a service	Surveys with open questions and free text response features for narratives of positive or negative experiences

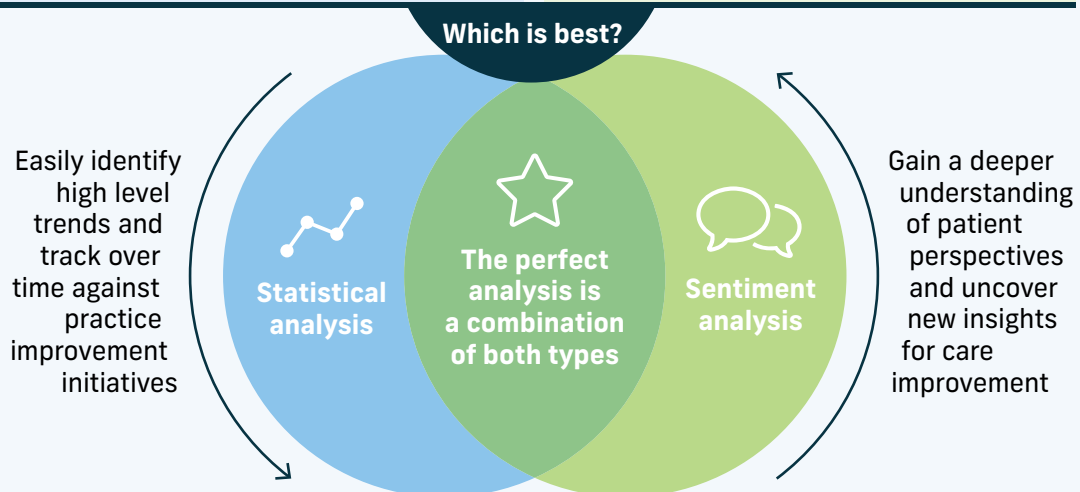


Figure 3: Understanding qualitative versus quantitative feedback.

# UNDERSTANDING PATIENT REPORTED MEASURES

**Patient Reported Measures (PRMs)** is an umbrella term encompassing both Patient Reported Experience Measures (PREMs) and Patient Reported Outcome Measures (PROMs). These measures play a pivotal role in optimising healthcare services and improving quality of care, particularly as the healthcare sector grapples with an ageing population and the rising burden of chronic diseases.

## PATIENT REPORTED EXPERIENCE MEASURES

**Patient Reported Experience Measures (PREMs)** are surveys or questionnaires designed to capture patients' perspectives on their healthcare experiences. They focus on aspects such as communication, timeliness and overall patient experience. PREMs provide invaluable insights into how patients perceive the quality of care they receive and are a fundamental component of creating a person-centred and integrated healthcare system.

As PREMs focus on capturing patients' perceptions of their healthcare experience, they are usually collected post-clinical practice through validated and secure survey tools. These tools are strategically designed to extract patients' genuine and unfiltered feedback regarding their clinical interactions.

**Examples of PREMs** questionnaires cover a wide range of topics, including the clinician's interest in the patient as a whole person, the patient's involvement in decision-making processes, quality of communication, accessibility of services, patient comfort, timeliness of service delivery, cleanliness of facilities, and professionalism and friendliness of staff. This comprehensive feedback empowers healthcare providers to identify strengths and opportunities for enhancing care, thereby supporting quality improvements and aligning services with national benchmarks.

### Importance of PREMs

By understanding a patient's experience, healthcare providers and systems can identify gaps in service delivery, allowing for timely and targeted improvements. This fosters a person-centric approach, where the patient's voice is not only heard but acts as a catalyst for positive change in healthcare delivery. PREMs provide advantages for clinicians and providers and facilitate a mutually beneficial partnership between healthcare professionals and patients. This collaborative approach leads to an enhanced care journey, better health outcomes and a more person-centred healthcare system.

## PATIENT REPORTED OUTCOME MEASURES

**Patient Reported Outcome Measures (PROMs)** represent a vital component of healthcare assessment, focusing on understanding the patient's perspective of their health and wellbeing at specific time points during their healthcare journey. PROMs data is collected through questionnaires, often before and after each treatment or intervention. This data aids in measuring effectiveness of specific care interventions and guides improvements to better address the patient's health outcomes.

As part of the broader umbrella of PRMs, PROMs offer essential insights into the patient's health and quality of life. These measures are critical for evaluating effectiveness of treatments, interventions and services.

**Examples of PROMs** questionnaires delve into various topics, including the patient's quality of life, symptoms, pain levels, physical function, self-reported health status and self-efficacy. Collecting this information allows healthcare providers to gauge impact of care on the patient's wellbeing.

### Importance of PROMs

Understanding patient experiences and outcomes is paramount for enhancing quality of care. By using PROMs, healthcare providers can measure the real-world impact of their interventions, making informed decisions to improve the patient's health outcomes. As healthcare needs can vary significantly from one patient to another and from one health service to another, PROMs tools have been categorised into condition-specific, disease-specific, profession-specific and generic tools. A 2016 [ACSQHC PROMs literature review](#) found that PROMs are integral to a movement towards person-centred systems of structuring, monitoring, delivering and financing healthcare in many countries.

### PATIENT REPORTED MEASURES

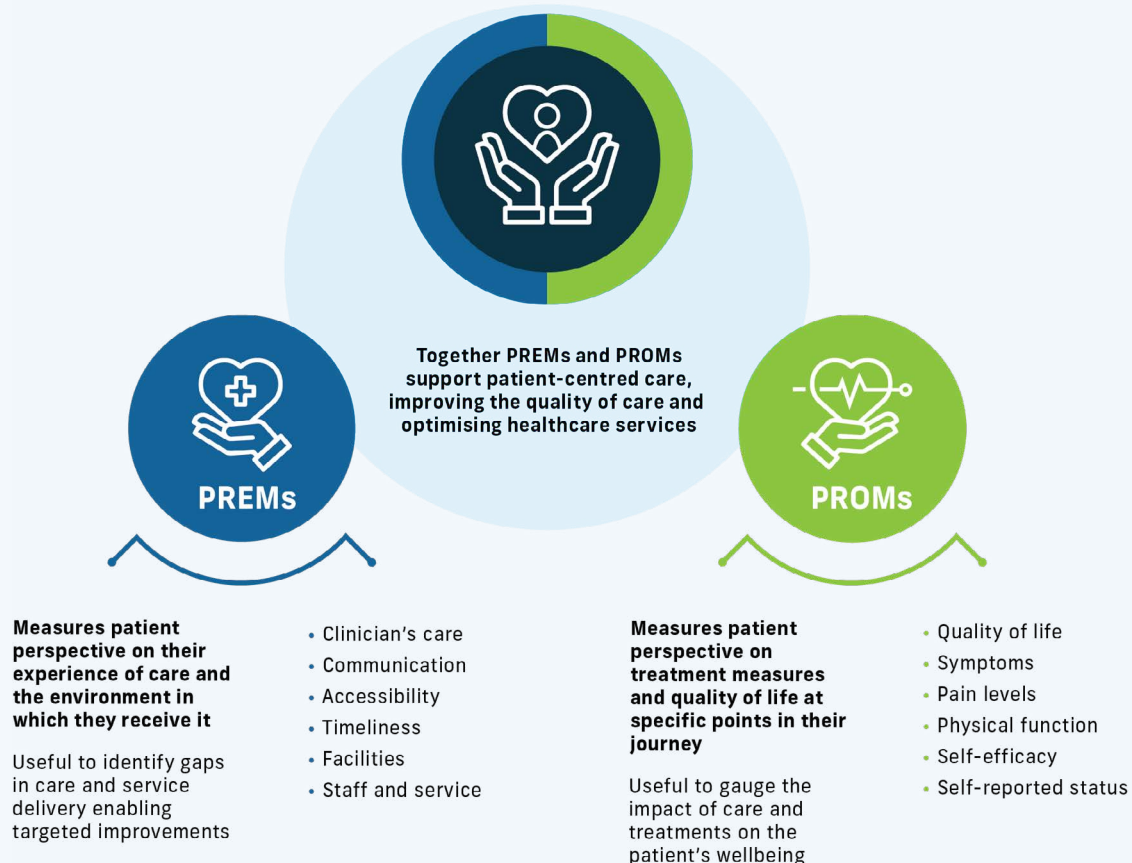


Figure 4: Understanding PREMs and PROMs.



## Case study |

# Insights from Camp Hill Healthcare: the journey towards excellence

### INTRODUCTION

**Camp Hill Healthcare has provided coordinated multidisciplinary and integrated care for over 75 years. With a mission to deliver superior healthcare services by addressing the diverse needs of its patients, Camp Hill Healthcare provides general practice and specialised services to meet the needs of the people in its community.**

### PATIENT EXPERIENCE AS AN OPERATIONAL PHILOSOPHY

At the heart of [Camp Hill Healthcare's](#) operational philosophy is a commitment to enhancing patient experience, with a focus on delivering care that is accessible, responsive and of the highest quality. Central to achieving this patient-centred approach is the use of technology.

A streamlined structure, ongoing collaboration and an emphasis on free-flowing communication are crucial to information sharing within the practice and enriching the patient experience at every touchpoint.

### THE ROLE OF PATIENT FEEDBACK

Under the guidance of Dr Ian Williams, Practice Principal, and Jan Chaffey, Group Chief Executive Officer of Camp Hill Healthcare and Stat Health (Aust) working closely with the whole practice team, patient feedback has been instrumental in identifying areas for improvement.

Built on the understanding that patients' perceptions and experiences are crucial indicators of service quality and areas needing attention, patient feedback surveys undertaken through the Australian General Practice Accreditation process are meticulously analysed.

### THE PRACTICE ACCREDITATION JOURNEY

The accreditation process is also critical in Camp Hill Healthcare's strategy for patient experience. Jan views the accreditation process not as a regulatory hurdle but as an opportunity to benchmark against best practices and identify areas for improvement. The process involves rigorous evaluation of practice standards, patient safety measures and quality of care, providing a comprehensive framework for continuous improvement.

### TECHNOLOGY AS AN ENABLER

Technology has been a critical enabler in improving patient experience at Camp Hill Healthcare. The adoption of Stat Health software has allowed for more efficient practice management and enhanced service delivery, streamlining operations and managing patient and practice needs efficiently and dynamically.

Transitioning from paper-based survey methods to the CFEP Surveys digital platform has also significantly enhanced patient engagement, facilitating a more user-friendly way for patients to share their experiences. This has led to an increase in the volume of feedback and enhanced the quality of insights.

### IMPACTFUL CHANGES RESULTING FROM FEEDBACK

Patient feedback has directly influenced practice improvements, such as renovating consultation and waiting rooms and introducing dedicated spaces for allied health services to create a less clinical environment. Additionally, responding to requests for more holistic health advice led to creating a Healthy Habits Clinic, catering to patients' desires for comprehensive health advice.

Jan also describes how feedback led to developing a more efficient appointment management system, addressing patient concerns about seeing their preferred practitioners. By quarantining appointments and utilising the Stat Health platform, they've optimised patient access to care and ensured a blend of acute and routine visits for a balanced practitioner workload.

### CONTINUOUS IMPROVEMENT AND THE FUTURE

Jan's advice to those new to the practice management and accreditation processes is clear: embrace feedback, implement robust systems and continuously refine them. The journey towards excellence in healthcare begins with building a positive workplace culture and delivering high quality patient care. For Camp Hill Healthcare, the patient experience is foundational, seamlessly integrated into their operations and pivotal in their ongoing mission to provide exceptional healthcare.

# STRATEGIES FOR ENHANCING PATIENT EXPERIENCE

## EFFECTIVE COMMUNICATION

Effective communication is key to enhancing patient experience. It goes beyond just conveying information; it's about establishing trust, providing clarity and ensuring patients feel heard. To achieve this, healthcare providers and organisations can employ several strategies:

**Clear and comprehensive information:** Healthcare providers must provide clear, comprehensive information on condition, treatment, out-of-pocket expenses and healthcare journey expectations. This includes using plain language and visual aids to enhance understanding.

**Empathetic and person-centred approach:** Demonstrating empathy and active listening can profoundly impact patient experience. Healthcare professionals must acknowledge the feelings, concerns and questions of patients, their carers and family, to create a supportive and compassionate environment.

**Cultural sensitivity:** Cultural sensitivity is crucial in diverse societies. Healthcare providers must respect patients, their carers and families in treatment decision-making.

**Training and standardised tools:** Training programs and standardised communication tools, such as patient-friendly brochures and checklists, can enhance professional communication skills. These tools can enhance consistency and ensure all patients receive a similar level of care.

## PERSON-CENTRED CARE

Person-centred care is a holistic approach that prioritises patients' individual needs, preferences and values. To enhance patient experience, healthcare providers can employ the following strategies:

**Tailored care plans:** Create care plans specific to each patient's needs. Recognise that one size does not fit all and ensure the patient's health goals and values are incorporated into their care plan.

**Shared decision-making:** Involve patients in treatment decision-making. Encourage them to ask questions, express their preferences and actively participate in making choices about their care.

**Engagement in care:** Empower patients to actively participate in their healthcare journey. This includes educating them about their conditions, providing information and resources for self-management and working with them to foster a sense of ownership in their health.

**Respect for autonomy:** Respect patient autonomy and choices, even if they differ from provider recommendations. Patients should have the final say in decisions that impact their health.

## TECHNOLOGICAL ADVANCEMENTS

Technological advancements have the potential to transform patient experience. In the modern healthcare environment, technologies can be harnessed to enhance patient care and engagement:

**Telehealth services:** Telehealth offers convenient, barrier-reducing healthcare access. It enables remote consultations, monitoring and follow-up care, ensuring patients can access care from the comfort of their homes.

**Virtual services:** Virtual services significantly enhance understanding and management of health plans. The strategic use of websites and SMS messages enables patients to receive timely reminders, links and prompts that are integral to post-treatment care, leading to improved outcomes and satisfaction.

**Patient portals:** Platforms like [My Health Record](#) allow access to secure online health records. Other patient portals provide the ability to schedule appointments and communicate with healthcare providers, enhancing convenience and patient engagement.



**Remote monitoring:** Wearable and remote monitoring tools enable providers to remotely track vital signs and health status. This enhances early intervention and patient engagement in their own health management.

leveraged to design and implement better, faster and more comprehensive patient feedback tools. These innovations provide valuable information and empower patients to actively participate in their care.

**Patient feedback instruments:** Collecting and analysing **patient feedback** directly enhances patient experience. Technological advancements have been



Figure 5: Inputs enhancing patient experience.

# FUTURE DIRECTIONS

## PATIENT EXPERIENCE BEST PRACTICE

Improving patient experience goes beyond just pleasing patients and cutting complaints. It involves genuinely valuing and embedding the patient's perspective in all care aspects. As healthcare continues to evolve, institutions and systems prioritising patient experience will thrive and provide truly holistic, compassionate and effective care.

The concept of co-creation emphasises the importance of partnerships between healthcare providers and patients in designing, planning and implementing healthcare services and processes. This collaborative approach recognises patients as active participants in their care, ensuring that medical services are not only responsive to their health needs but also respectful of their preferences, values, and experiences. By integrating the concept of co-creation, healthcare systems can enhance patient experience, improve health outcomes and foster a more efficient, patient-centred approach to care delivery.

Other key elements of patient experience best practice include:

**Regular training and coaching:** Frequent workshops maintain person-centred care philosophies in staff focus. Standardise responses including relevant professional development and coaching based on [patient and colleague feedback](#).

**Multidisciplinary approach:** Incorporate input from administrative staff (clerical, janitorial, management, etc.) and clinical roles (doctors, nursing staff, secondary care teams, etc.) when designing patient experience strategies.

**Feedback loop:** Actively seek and use feedback to commit to continual improvement. Analyse feedback to better understand any patterns or trends requiring attention and highlight [quality improvement](#) initiatives across services.

**Personalisation:** Recognise each patient is unique. Personalised care plans, when possible, can drastically

enhance the patient's perception of care. Strive for seamless information flow and collaboration across services using critical friends groups and other patient engagement activities and tools like [MyMedicare](#).

Patient activation transforms healthcare beyond patient experience. In the Australian healthcare context, where the goal is to provide effective medical care and empower individuals to take charge of their health and self-care, patient engagement and activation become even more crucial. Integrating these concepts is vital for caring for an ageing population, improving chronic disease management and evolving towards a preventative care model.

## HEALTHCARE TECH AND HEALTH EQUITY

Technology is providing new avenues for improving patient experience and healthcare delivery. The future of healthcare will increasingly rely on digital technologies to meet patient expectations, improve access to care and enhance the overall patient experience.

The Australian Government's [Digital Health Blueprint 2023–2033](#) outlines a strategic vision for integrating digital technologies into the healthcare sector to provide a more person-centred, connected and sustainable health system.

A key focus of the blueprint is on improving health equity through digital innovations. Through the adoption of telehealth, electronic health records and personalised health apps, for example, the plan advocates for a person-centred approach that emphasises convenience, accessibility and empowerment of patients in their healthcare journey. It acknowledges the disparities in health outcomes and access to care that exist across different communities and seeks to address these through targeted digital health solutions.

The blueprint underscores a holistic approach to healthcare reform and envisions a future where digital health tools streamline healthcare delivery and contribute to a more equitable, inclusive and patient-focused healthcare system.

## PATIENT ACTIVATION

According to a recent article in the [Medical Journal of Australia](#), patient activation is a behavioural concept encompassing an individual’s involvement in their health and healthcare decisions. It comprises knowledge, skills and confidence – essential for active engagement and participation in self-care. Studies have shown higher patient activation scores are associated with improved self-management behaviours, preventive measures and better clinical outcomes. On the other hand, patients with lower activation levels are more likely to have poorer clinical outcomes, higher hospitalisation rates and are less likely to adopt healthy behaviours.

As outlined in the [Self-care for Health: a national policy blueprint](#), the importance of patient engagement in adopting positive health behaviours and actively participating in health and self-care cannot be underestimated. This concept of patient activation is instrumental in achieving positive health outcomes, reducing unnecessary healthcare utilisation and improving patient and provider experiences.

The key to enhancing patient activation is using an evidence-based tool like the [Patient Activation Measure \(PAM®\) survey](#) which has been embraced by health providers internationally as demonstrated in more than two decades of research across [900+ published studies in this research library](#).

### The importance of tailoring care

By understanding a patient’s activation level, clinicians can tailor communication and interventions to improve self-care behaviours, resulting in numerous benefits. For example, the PAM® has shown that even a slight increase in a patient’s activation score can lead to considerable improvements in health outcomes and reduced healthcare costs. Studies have shown even a single-point increase in a patient’s PAM® score can lead to a 3% improvement in health outcomes and a 3% reduction in healthcare costs. With targeted interventions, patients with lower activation levels can achieve significant changes in their scores within 4–6 months.

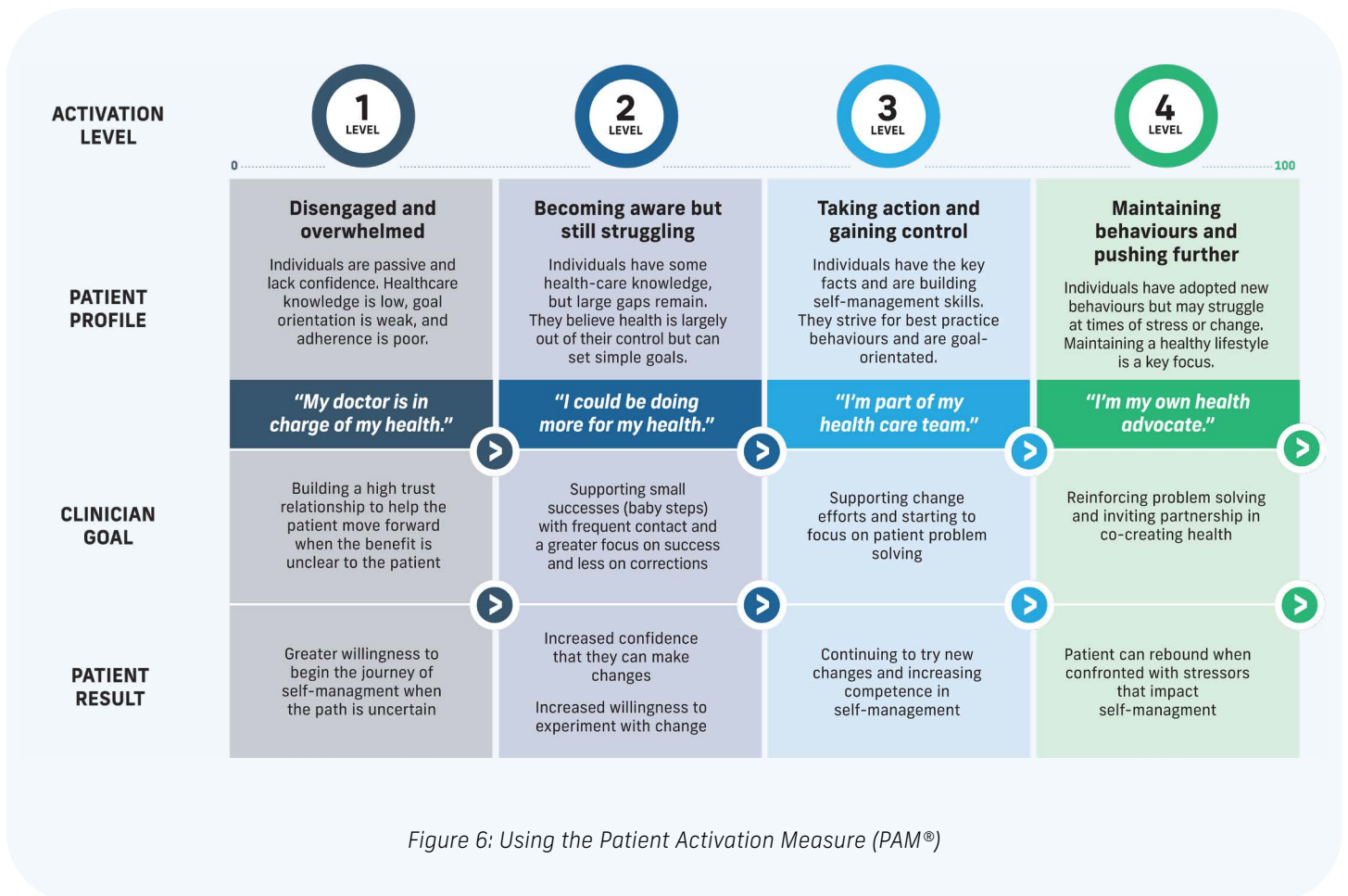


Figure 6: Using the Patient Activation Measure (PAM®)

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