



Terms of Reference¹

1. Background

The New Zealand health sector is faced with significant challenges, particularly with respect to workforce, financial sustainability, quality and escalating public demands and expectations. Unlike most industries, in health, ICT to date has largely been deployed to improve current practices and models of care. But ICT can and should also be utilised as a disruptive force; that is, as an innovation enabler that eventually overturns existing practices and transforms the landscape of this sector.

This is no more pertinent than in the potential offered by telehealth. Telehealth offers the opportunity to support (or in some cases enable) improvements in health care delivery and increased cost effectiveness in areas such as:

- Shared care
- Clinical networks
- Patient centred health and self-management
- Hub and spoke service provision
- Care provision in remote locations
- Shift towards focus on primary and community care
- Integrated Family Health Centres
- Whanau Ora
- Workforce development

As a result of the potential to enable or even drive significant improvements in the sector, telehealth is experiencing major growth around the world. New Zealand telehealth trials and services which have been undertaken since the mid-1990s have not always proved sustainable or met their full potential. However several significant new initiatives are underway and are showing extremely promising results.

The research on benefits with respect to improved patient outcomes, new service delivery models and cost efficiencies enabled by telehealth is growing and this is starting to represent a compelling evidence base for investment in these technologies. For this reason we need to move beyond pilots towards a considered and nationally coherent approach to telehealth.

The fragmented nature of the approach adopted to date in New Zealand threatens the effectiveness and the returns on our investments and does little to encourage increased and effective uptake. The National Institute for Health Innovation (NIHI) has been provided funding by the National Health IT Board (NHITB) to set up the New Zealand Telehealth Forum to: a) help address these deficiencies, b) take advantage of the innovation being demonstrated in individual initiatives, and c) maximise the telehealth capabilities that will be provided by the ultrafast broadband and rural broadband programmes.

¹ Provisional, to be ratified in first meeting of Telehealth Leadership Group, March 2012

2. Accountability

In a general sense, the Forum is accountable to the New Zealand health sector represented in this case by the NHITB. However the Forum is required to act as an independent centre with day to day leadership provided by NIHI, at the University of Auckland. It is recognised however that other governance options may in due course present themselves and additional accountabilities may arise based on funding and sponsorship sources for the Forum's programme of work.²

3. Role

The role of the Forum is to:

- identify and promote the role of telehealth services in helping address the challenges faced by the NZ healthcare sector
- educate clinical, policy and funding organisations and to encourage their active support for and involvement in telehealth initiatives
- instigate specific initiatives that utilise telehealth and demonstrate their impact on the health system
- develop collaborations with international healthcare organisations to adopt and adapt their telehealth experience
- drive a cohesive national approach; to ensure that standards are developed and adopted; to drive cost effective service provision from suppliers
- research the issues and barriers to adoption, such as non-alignment of payments with new modes of service; technology integration; user (clinician and patient) resistance; privacy and confidentiality issues
- act as a clearing house for available resources and to support the building of business cases for the use of telehealth
- enable the creation of centres of excellence in the use of telehealth.

4. Scope

The scope of the Forum (and its work programme) is based on the Forum's definition of telehealth as the collective term for:

healthcare delivery, or closely related processes, when participants are separated by distance, and information and communications technologies and infrastructures are used to overcome that distance.

It includes:

² The Forum is not intended, at least initially, to be a membership based organisation. It will be financially sustained through its initial funding from the NHITB, and involvement in telehealth projects and / or additional grants from stakeholders. The Forum is oriented towards action and this will often require the Forum to undertake paid assignments (normally as part of larger projects being managed by third parties). Unless and until the Forum takes on an appropriate legal structure e.g. limited liability, these will be contracted through NIHI.

- the use of both store and forward and real time technologies for remote diagnosis, treatment and prevention of disease and injuries, as well as health care related education, research and evaluation (traditionally referred to as telemedicine)
- remote management between a patient in their domestic settings and their care providers (telemonitoring)
- the use of mobile devices to deliver healthcare and to support healthy lifestyle services.

Note: When considered as a subset of “e-health” the boundaries of telehealth can become blurred and can include applications such as the interactive portals (websites) currently in use in the mental health sector in New Zealand and overseas. The Forum will consider the merits of including these types of application as and when they arise.

5. Structure and responsibilities

The Forum will comprise a Chair, a Telehealth Leadership Group (TLG) and an Operations function which will carry out Secretariat and consulting activities. It is also expected that an Executive will be established to oversee the Forum’s agenda, work programme and finances.

Collectively the Forum will have a strong clinical focus, with the following expertise and attributes:

- knowledge and experience in the theory and practice of telehealth as described above
- knowledge of the enabling technologies
- knowledge of New Zealand’s current health services delivery in public and private settings
- an ability to think in terms of innovative solutions that can transform the traditional service delivery models
- experience in having a governance role in similar organisations
- the passion and commitment to ensure that the Forum succeeds in its objectives.

The **Telehealth Leadership Group** includes members selected from an Expression of Interest process and appointed members to ensure that the telehealth sector as a whole is represented, including clinical disciplines, consumers, policy makers, planning and funding managers, ICT experts and industry suppliers. There will also be representation covering geographic and cultural communities of interest. The role of the TLG is to:

- advise on requirements and priorities for telehealth deployments to support rural and provincial hospitals, integrated care centres , home monitoring and clinical networks
- advise on matters relating to environmental considerations, e.g. barriers to uptake, technical considerations, protocols and guidelines, and standards
- provide advice and support for projects undertaken by the Forum
- contribute to the achievement of the overall objectives of the Telehealth Leadership Group to the maximum extent practicable.

6. Key Tasks

The key tasks for the Forum to June 2012 are:

- develop a recommended work plan that focuses on the following areas of telehealth:

- support for small hospitals and integrated care centres
 - support for in home monitoring (telemonitoring)
 - standards for telehealth services
 - support for clinicians wanting to use better quality videoconferencing.
- develop a recommended work plan (and related activities) to address the barriers to the adoption of telehealth , including telehealth workforce development, re-imburement policies, the evidence base and the positions of professional bodies
 - develop a communication strategy (and related activities), that addresses NZTF stakeholder groups and communication methods, e.g. seminars, web site, stakeholder meetings
 - encourage and / or support individual telehealth projects that demonstrate the NZTF's ability to initiate, lead, coordinate, support and evaluate. The projects are to be agreed (and funded) on a case by case basis.

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