

Virtual Telehealth implementation in results delivery process for BreastScreen NSW Hunter New England assessment clinic

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Introduction

BreastScreen NSW Hunter New England spans a large community spread across a substantial geographical area of 130,000 square kilometres . In the calendar year 2023, our screening efforts extended to approximately 55,000 women, with approximately 1800 requiring assessment in our recall clinics. Distance to follow up BreastScreen fixed sites can present challenges for some clients. Following screening mammograms, some clients are required to return to these fixed sites for the Triple Test Evaluation of identified breast abnormalities.

For some, this entails potential hurdles such as considerable distance and complications related to transportation such as age or co-morbidities. For our purposes Telehealth is defined as virtual consultations using webcams and microphones. Virtual care as defined by the NSW Agency for Clinical Innovation (2024) ‘is an integral part of a sustainable health care system that delivers outcomes that matter to patients, is personalised, invests in wellness and is digitally-enabled and innovative in its practice’.

Clients all attend Assessment Clinic appointments in person, however for Results Clinic appointments we are able to offer the Telehealth virtual option. The complexities of results delivery were compounded during the COVID-19 pandemic due to varying travel restrictions in the areas we serve which necessitated exploring other options for consultations.

Objectives/Aims

Our primary goal is to provide timely, personalised, informative, and sensitive results delivery consultations to our clients, introducing a practical alternative to in-person results delivery consultations when physical attendance is unfeasible.

Originating as a trial, our method of assessment outcome results delivery via Telehealth virtual consultations has evolved into a valuable offering to our clients.

It is now integrated into our practice as an option for delivery of information in an efficient way offering women increased convenience and comfort at an often challenging stage of their care trajectory.

Description/Methodology

Informed consent to proceed with a virtual results delivery process is discussed with and obtained from the client before proceeding with this results pathway.

Utilizing the My Virtual Care (MVC) platform, developed by Hunter New England Health District, we offer clients a one-click solution without the need for additional app or website installations.

Description/Methodology continued

This platform is extremely efficient, and we are supported by comprehensive User Guide information and a technical support line if staff or patients require additional information.

The Telehealth consultations, initiated through an email link, are conducted in private consultation rooms equipped with webcams. Clients engage with doctors and nursing staff, benefitting from visual aids such as imaging and diagrams via shared screens.

Feedback is garnered through a post-appointment online Quality Audit Reporting System (QARS) questionnaire survey. The link to the survey was emailed to clients.

Results

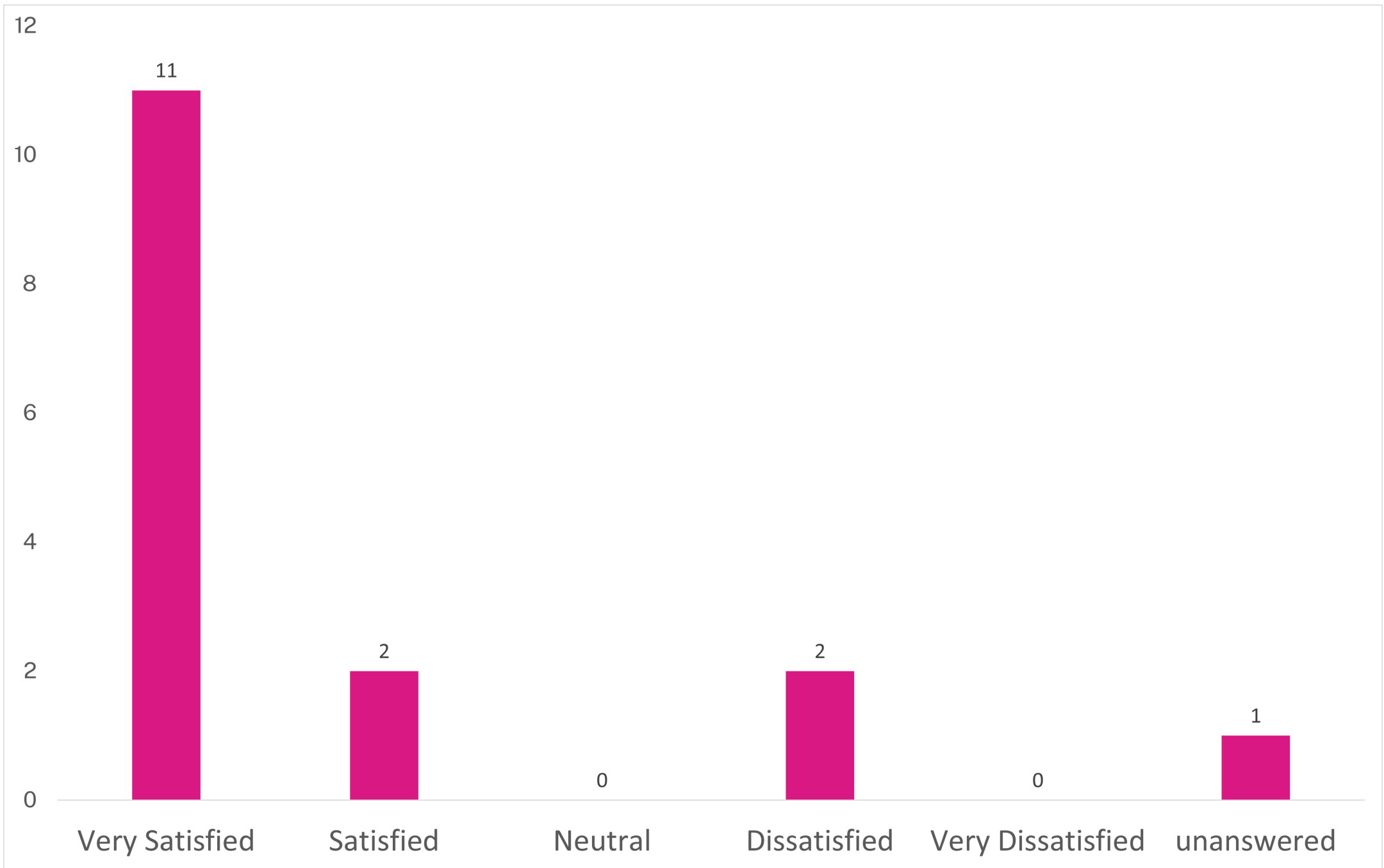
Outcomes reveal a positive response from clients who appreciate the convenience and privacy of home-based consultations for their Results Clinic appointment, particularly when receiving potentially challenging news (Table 1, Graph 1).

The elimination of extensive travel both before and after the experience, coupled with a maintained connection to our assessment team, holds tangible value for clients and significant clinical importance for our team.

Comments such as convenience based on distance, conflicting commitments and being unwell and still able to attend are evidence of this enhancement to service delivery.

Results: Graph 1

Overall client satisfaction with Telehealth assessment results clinic experience BreastScreen NSW Hunter New England (n=16)



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Results: Table 1

Reason for using Telehealth	no. of respondents
Distance to travel to appointment	8
Away on holidays	2
Other, not specified	2
Could do it if I had a cold	1
Suggested by Breastscreen	1
Satisfied with previous telehealth experience	1
unanswered	1
Total	16

Conclusion

The overall positive feedback from our survey confirms the proposal that offering Telehealth to clients for the results delivery process is a Quality Improvement Project which enhances the experience of some clients at BreastScreen NSW Hunter New England.

Clients are reassured and informed by teleconferencing interaction with our team in which they have the opportunity to see, hear and interact with our clinicians in real time. This is a service delivery option that clients are grateful to have offered to them. Our positive experience will see the continuation of this option within our service. Giving clients the opportunity to provide structured feedback will ensure that our clinical practice in this space will continue to develop.

Aligned with the Nursing and Midwifery Digital Health Capability Framework (2020) Strategy within Australia’s Digital Health Strategy, our initiative strives to enhance the client experience in BSNSW Hunter New England assessment results clinics.

Relevant Resources

- Nursing and Midwifery | Australian Digital Health Agency
- Medical-Board-Guidelines-Telehealth-consultations-with-patients-effective-1-September-2023. PDF
- Medical Board of Australia - Telehealth consultations with patients
- Virtual care in practice guide (nsw.gov.au)

