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Exercise Physiology in the Digital Age: Connecting with more Patients through Telehealth

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Digital health, in particular “telehealth,” is increasingly being recognised as an effective way to improve access to health services for people living in locations where access to these services may be limited and for people wanting to access these services in a more convenient way. Accredited Exercise Physiologists (AEPs), are the ideal allied health professional to utilise digital health to overcome common barriers for providing a service, and presents a great opportunity to capture rural and remote patients to deliver gold-standard care. A wide body of research supports the use of digital health in a diverse range of clinical scenarios, including patients with cancer, neurological conditions, musculoskeletal conditions and before and after orthopaedic surgery. Research to date has indeed shown telehealth to be equivalently effective for patients against usual, “in-person” care and improve overall patient outcomes, including satisfaction and rehabilitation compliance, and demonstrated economic savings to both the patient and practitioner. This presentation will introduce the concept of digital health and discuss the practicalities of using such a service, review regulatory landscape, review current models of care and clinical experiences from two clinical AEPs, highlight the key points for AEPs interested in using telehealth in their practices, and discuss the current limitations and future directions of digital health, particularly what that means for clinical practice for AEPs.