



# Care Recoded

General practice in the digital age

# Foreword

## Dr Harriet Bradley

We are on the brink of a healthcare revolution and I believe that digital healthcare is going to deliver enormous change and benefits for our patients. We know that both patients and healthcare professionals want the substantial benefits that digital innovation can bring and we are excited to be part of the digital healthcare revolution.

Often there are concerns that digital healthcare only benefits the young, fit and healthier, yet the research shows that this is not the case. For example, two-thirds of over-65s are willing to consult with their GP online<sup>1</sup>. Digital healthcare will make accessing healthcare much easier for elderly and housebound patients and could be a critical safety valve as we deal with an increasingly ageing population's healthcare needs.

Working parents also report that they find the new technology more convenient than trying to access their GP Practice during traditional working hours. The flexibility offered by video conferencing enables healthcare workers to become more responsive to all of their patients' needs. In particular, digital technology empowers patients to better manage their own health, including chronic health conditions, which will lead to significant improvement in public health initiatives.

Doctors also stand to benefit both from the ability of this technology to relieve pressure on their day-to-day work in practice, as well as via the new professional opportunities that digital health creates. GPs report that they have found that digital technology unlocks a new way of working which has enabled them to work flexibly and remotely. LIVI's NHS partner surgeries have reported that adding digital services allows them to focus more time and attention on the seriously ill, which can lead to a more satisfying balance of work.

The new technology also benefits the wider healthcare economy, for example through reducing the burden and cost to both patients and the NHS from unnecessary A&E and Urgent Care Centre attendances. This benefit has already been shown in our service in Surrey where 14%<sup>2</sup> of our patients surveyed said that they would have gone to A&E or Urgent Care, had video consultations not been available.

Despite all these positive benefits, currently less than 1%<sup>3</sup> of all GP consultations are delivered digitally. This report shows that a lack of training and outdated infrastructure is what is holding back wider adoption of this new technology and way of working, rather than doctors not wanting to use technology. The challenge is whether the NHS is able to take advantage of this revolution, ensuring doctors are confident and ready to use the new technology. We are committed to helping doctors up-skill and have committed to creating publicly available training resources based on our own specialist experience and knowledge.

The medical profession has always embraced change. Whilst adopting these new technologies represents a significant challenge, if we work together we can take a huge step forward in revolutionising the way we deliver primary healthcare. This will enable all of us to deliver better care to our patients.



*"For new digital healthcare technologies to reach their full potential and deliver significantly better patient outcomes without the need to increase resources, the whole health and care system will need to anticipate and plan for the future."*



**The Topol Review, 2019**

<sup>1</sup> Survation research. Q: If it were available through your usual GP practice, how willing would you be to consult a GP in the following ways in the future? [By video link]. Base: 466, UK Public over 65 years of age

<sup>2</sup> Results of LIVI post-appointment patient survey.

<sup>3</sup> Survation research. Q: What proportion of your patient consultations do you currently deliver in the following ways? [By video link]. Base: 100 GPs



## Introduction

# Patients have high confidence and expectations of digital healthcare

The NHS is accelerating towards a digital future, with all patients in England to have access to video consultations by April 2021<sup>4</sup>.

This universal access to digital healthcare will empower more and more patients to engage with their own health, opening up the opportunity of targeted prevention that reduces the need for physical care.

Contrary to some perceptions, demand for digital healthcare is not just for younger generations. Even among the 65+ age group, almost two-thirds (65%)<sup>5</sup> say they would be willing to consult their GP over video link if it were available. In fact, this new technology will potentially hold most benefit for older patients, who will be able to remotely manage chronic and multiple conditions by accessing care from their own home.

# 63%

**of patients think video consultations will be widespread in 10 years<sup>6</sup>**

“

*“It feels like we’re in a healthcare revolution - and this is just the start. We live in a 24-hour society, expectations are higher and everyone wants everything right now. And that’s just as true for GP appointments. Using digital platforms lets us meet these new demands.”*

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**Anonymised GP quote from independent research.**

<sup>4</sup> GP contract - A five-year framework for GP contract reform to implement The NHS Long Term Plan

<sup>5</sup> Survation research. Q: If it were available through your usual GP practice, how willing would you be to consult a GP in the following ways in the future? [By video link]. Base: 466, UK Public over 65 years of age

<sup>6</sup> Survation research. Q: How likely or unlikely do you think it will be that there will be widespread availability of video consultations on the NHS in the next 10 years? Base: 2,017

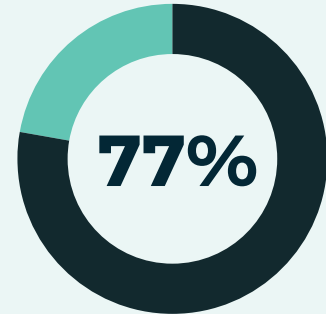
# The challenge

## Empowering GPs for the digital age

Despite the majority of GPs believing that video consultations will become commonplace, only 1% of all consultations are delivered via video<sup>7</sup>. The majority of GPs have reported that they, their practice and the NHS do not feel fully prepared to deliver video consultations.

This is juxtaposed with an increasing patient appetite for digital services, in which 15% of patients report they would be likely to switch practices in order to be able to access digital healthcare<sup>8</sup>.

The research highlighted two key areas in which GPs feel underprepared to deliver video consultations.



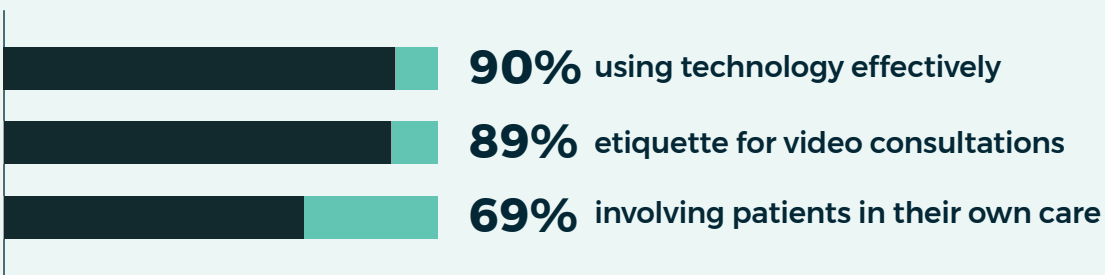
**77%**  
of GPs said they have not had any specific training on video consultations.<sup>9</sup>

### GPs need training to help them adapt to digital practice

Most GPs recognise that they will need to adapt their approach to deliver effective consultations via video, including how they use technology, and how to best involve and communicate with patients.

Despite this, 77%<sup>9</sup> of GPs said they have not had any specific training on video consultations.

### Proportion of GPs who feel that the following areas may require adaption to deliver video consultations effectively<sup>10</sup>:



Subtle differences in patient interactions, including observing patients in non-clinical settings (such as their own homes) provides an opportunity for a fuller and richer consultation. However, much as in the way GPs hone their clinical practice over time, adapting to this mode of care requires experience and training. This is what we refer to as 'websites manner'.

<sup>7</sup> Survation research. Q: What proportion of your patient consultations do you currently deliver in the following ways? [By video link]. Base: 100 GPs

<sup>8</sup> Survation research. Q: How likely or unlikely would you be to switch GP practices if an alternative practice offered video consultation and yours did not? Base: 2,017 gen pop

<sup>9</sup> Survation research. Q: In which of the following areas, if any, have you received training with relation to delivering video consultation? Base: 100 GPs

<sup>10</sup> Survation research. Q: Do you feel the following areas require adaptations in your practise to deliver video consultations effectively? Base: 100 GPs



*"You have to hone up on your visual skills; there's a lot of information that you can see in a patient's face. You can observe how their speech is, whether they're in discomfort, whether they're flushed [or] whether they're short of breath"*

**Anonymised GP quote from independent research.**



*"I think that it takes a different skill set, so I think as an experienced GP myself, it took me a while to get used to doing that...but it's slightly different in a medical environment and you have to concentrate quite hard."*

**Anonymised GP quote from independent research.**



## IT infrastructure and tech support

Modern and reliable IT systems are essential to enable general practice to seize the opportunity of digitisation and deliver improved care to patients. However, 78% of GPs see poor IT and tech support, such as hardware and wi-fi capabilities, as a barrier to the adoption of video consultations<sup>11</sup>.

The consequences of this can be huge. It is estimated that over 25% of clinicians lose more than four hours a week because of inefficient hardware and systems. This exacerbates workload pressures on doctors<sup>12</sup>.

**78%**

**of GPs see poor technology and a lack of tech support as a barrier<sup>11</sup>**

This challenge has been recognised by government, with welcome steps to upgrade wi-fi across the primary care estate, allowing more seamless sharing of patient information and digital interactions between GPs and patients. The roll out of 5G networks will accelerate this process, and offer new opportunities for care to be delivered remotely.

However, GP perceptions of a 'tech barrier' also reflect the need for more investment in wider change management around the implementation of technology and the impact for staff and patients. Digital transformation can not simply be about purchasing new technology, but must be about the role it plays in reshaping the delivery of care as part of a longer term digital dividend.

## Unlocking the digital future

Although the majority of GPs feel underprepared for video consultations, there is much to be optimistic about in overcoming this challenge, ahead of all patients being given access to video consultations by April 2021 as set out in the recent GP contract.

As video and online consultations become more commonplace, it will be increasingly important to strengthen the link between physical and digital services so that digital can truly begin to address some of the core challenges facing general practice, such as rising demand and enabling patients to manage their own health through better and more targeted preventative advice. This digi-physical experience can be delivered in a number of ways, but relies on deeper partnerships between digital providers and practices to create a truly joined up service for patients.

<sup>11</sup> Suvation research. Q: Which if any of the following do you see as barriers to the delivery of primary care through video consultation? Base: 100 GPs

<sup>12</sup> BMA: Technology, data and infrastructure supporting NHS staff

## Overcoming training barriers

GPs told us that they need clearer support and training to adapt to delivering digital care. Drawing on the expertise of experienced providers and clinicians (KRY has delivered over 1.2m video consultations across Europe), there needs to be system-wide investment in training and upskilling to ensure all GPs and GPs-in-training can access appropriate modules, webinars and ongoing 'top up' sessions to equip the workforce to deliver high quality digital care.

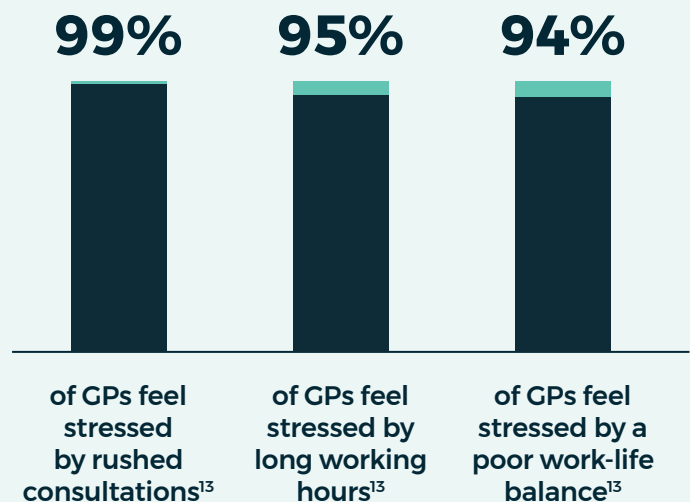
### This should include:

- Health Education England to introduce a module on video consultation in the core GP training programme, drawing on the expertise of experienced providers and other more mature digital systems.
- Existing GPs should be provided with CPD (Continuing Professional Development) accredited training modules as part of the ongoing digital upskilling of the workforce.

## Creating a sustainable future for the workforce

Statistics overwhelmingly show that GPs are stressed by long hours, rushed consultations and poor work life balance, with this leading to record numbers leaving, or intending on leaving, the profession. It is unrealistic to think that digital solutions alone can solve these challenges, yet there is a clear opportunity to provide more flexibility through remote working and give GPs the variety that sustains a long career.

This involves maintaining a mix of both physical and digital practice, so that clinicians retain their core competencies while developing a digital skill set.



<sup>13</sup> Suration research. Q: How stressful do you find the following aspects of the GP role? Base 100 GPs.

<sup>14</sup> Suration research. Q: Do you think the use of video consultations make it easier or harder to do the following? Base 100 GPs.

# Conclusion

The NHS' digital future is just around the corner, and primary care is leading the way in using technology to transform care for patients.

The benefits for patients of online services in terms of convenience, access, and speed of care are well documented, but we must not forget that the potential to enhance GP satisfaction and productivity is vast and will only increase over time.

Investment in training and IT infrastructure will help prepare the workforce for this future, but must come as part of a wider reimagining of how patients engage with their own health and the expectations of how and when they interact with their doctor.

Not only will patients expect their healthcare to become digitised in the way most other aspects of their lives are currently, 15%<sup>15</sup> would be likely to switch practices to receive such services.

Likewise, there is an increasing expectation from GPs for more employment flexibility and better work life balance, that helps prevent burnout so doctors can sustain a long career.

Implemented correctly, digital technology has the power to modernise primary care in a way that empowers patients while creating a sustainable future for GPs.

General practice is ready to embrace this opportunity, and recode care for the digital age.

# Background and methodology

## About LIVI

Founded in Sweden in 2015 under the name 'KRY', LIVI has a vision for more equal and accessible healthcare.

LIVI enables patients to see an NHS GP by video consultation as they would if they were attending an appointment in the surgery. LIVI patients can access medical advice, referrals and prescriptions all within a single app, and without having to de-register from their current GP surgery. 96% of patients who LIVI treats by video tell us that their case has been fully resolved, and where symptoms require a physical examination, the LIVI GP will refer patients on to the right specialists.

Having delivered over 1 million video consultations across Europe, KRY's experience in digital care has shown digital care is the future for providing scalable patient access quality primary care, as well as delivering a better work/life balance for GPs.

## Research overview

This report investigates current perceptions of and attitudes towards GP video consultations in the UK amongst the general public and GPs, highlighting perceived barriers to their widespread implementation, as well as potential benefits.

It presents the conclusions from primary research conducted with a robust and representative sample of 2,017 members of the UK public and 100 GPs conducted from 2–5 September 2019. The findings of these surveys were complemented by a series of research interviews with patients and GPs who had experience of using video consultations.

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<sup>15</sup> Survation research. Q: How likely or unlikely would you be to switch GP practices if an alternative practice offered video consultation and yours did not? Base: 2,017 gen pop

