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## Tools and Skills in Digital World



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A recent research shows the growing adoption rates of digital health tools by physicians in the U.S. during the last three years. In the meantime, Australia is helping its nurses and midwives to master digital skills for better provision of care.

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### Adoption of Digital Tools Among U.S. Physicians

The American Medical Association (AMA) has released a new research focusing on the adoption of digital health tools by physicians. The results of [AMA Digital Health Research](#) show that in 2016–2019 the number of physicians who recognise the importance of such tools in improving efficiency and safety in healthcare has substantially grown.

The research examines seven categories of digital health tools for patient engagement, clinical data interpretation and use, and outcome management.

**Telehealth/virtual visits**, ie audio/video connections used to see patients remotely. The adoption of such tools among physicians had grown from 14% in 2016 to 28% in 2019. This is the largest increase among the seven categories.

**Remote monitoring and management for improved care**, ie mobile applications and devices for use by chronic disease patients for daily measurement of vital signs. (readings are missing or out of range), alerts are generated. The adoption had grown from 13% in 2016 to 22% in 2019.

**Remote monitoring for efficiency**, ie smart versions of common clinical devices such as thermometers or scales that can automatically enter readings into the patient's EHR. The adoption had grown from 12% in 2016 to 16% in 2019.

**Clinical decision support**, ie modules or apps used with the EHR that highlight potentially significant changes in patient data. The adoption had grown from 28% in 2016 to 37% in 2019.

**Patient engagement**, ie solutions to promote patient wellness and active participation in their care for chronic diseases (eg adherence to treatment regimens). The adoption had grown from 26% in 2016 to 32% in 2019.

**Point of care/workflow enhancement**, ie communication and sharing of electronic clinical data for specialist consultations, referrals and/or transitions of care. The adoption had grown from 42% in 2016 to 47% in 2019.

**Consumer access to clinical data**, ie secure access allowing patients to view clinical information, receive reminders and arrange prescription refills, appointments or consultations. The adoption had grown from 53% in 2016 to 58% in 2019. Tools from this category are used by the largest number of physicians.

Physicians place increasing importance on providing remote care to patients, hence the remarkable growth in the category of telehealth. Efficiency and patient safety remain the most important factors for physicians' interest in digital health tools, while concerns about patient adherence, convenience and physician burnout are on the rise. Liability coverage, EHR integration and data privacy are the three most important requirements driving the adoption of digital tools by physicians. At the same time, the importance of peer review validation as a physician requirement for digital health tools has increased.

AMA has also looked into the awareness and current usage of emerging technologies among physicians, such as [augmented intelligence](#), [blockchain](#) and [precision medicine](#). Although levels of awareness exceed adoption rates, over one-third of physicians plan to start using such technologies within the year, especially with chronic care patients.

## Australia Encourages Adoption

In Australia, the importance of digital tools adoption is recognised not only among physicians but also among [nurses and midwives](#). As part of the National Digital Health Strategy, the Australian Digital Health Agency (ADHA) [has launched](#) a professional development programme to identify the necessary digital health capabilities for these categories of health workers. The programme is undertaken in collaboration with Health Informatics Society of Australia (HISA).

Nurses and midwives will have the opportunity to learn about the specific digital health skills they need, and how a draft digital health capability framework could be used in health institutions as a professional development guide in their field.

Consultations has started in early February and will run for six weeks. They will include an online survey, webinars, face-to-face consultations and ability to provide written submissions. The final framework is expected to be launched at the Nursing Informatics global congress [NI 2020](#) in Brisbane, on 27–29 July 2020.

Sources: [AMA](#), [HealthcareITNews](#)

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