

With the current resurgence of COVID-19 cases in Australia and around the globe, building a sustainable health systems has never been more important

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PCHSS Spring Newsletter 2020

With the current resurgence of COVID-19 cases in Australia and around the globe, the building of health systems able to cope with unforeseen shocks has never been more important.

Against this backdrop, the PCHSS has continued in its mission to generate, disseminate, and apply research crucial to health system sustainability. In this spring edition of our newsletter, we highlight some of our investigators' and system partners' recent work.

What is the PCHSS?

The PCHSS is a \$10.75M, five-year collaboration involving 17 lead investigators, 20 expert advisors, and over 40 system implementation partners from around Australia. Our vision is that our research findings significantly influence the development of a more resilient health care system – one that

is affordable, cost effective, and delivers improved health outcomes for all Australians.

Introducing the PCHSS' Observatory on Health System Sustainability

In recognition of the PCHSS Centre Coordination and Research Unit's contributions to research on factors that affect the sustainability of health systems nationally and internationally, the Unit has been renamed the Observatory on Health System Sustainability. The Observatory will continue to facilitate the dissemination and translation of PCHSS research outcomes through marketing, webinars, and stakeholder workshops.

Recent and Upcoming Events

PCHSS 2020-2021 webinar series

Between October 2020 and April 2021, the PCHSS is hosting a series of webinars on different facets of health system sustainability. Registration details for [upcoming events](#) are available on our website. If you missed any of our webinars, you can watch them on our [YouTube channel](#). Follow us on Twitter [@PCHSS_AIHI](#) for notifications of upcoming events and registration links.

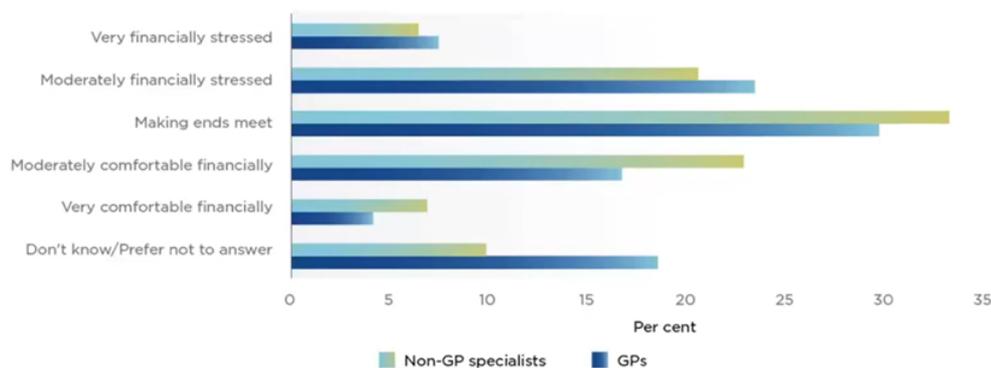
- **26 October 2020, 2-3 pm (AEST):** “[Impact of COVID-19 on the Australian Health Workforce](#)”; moderated by [Professor Jeffrey Braithwaite](#) (PCHSS and Macquarie University). In this webinar, [Professor Tony Scott](#) (PCHSS and Melbourne University) revealed the extent of the COVID-19 pandemic's impact on the working patterns, mental health, and finances of Australian GPs and non-GP specialists in

private practices. Associate Professor Liam Caffery (PCHSS and The University of Queensland) then discussed what the large, pandemic-fuelled upsurge in telehealth usage has meant for GPs, health consumers, and the health system in 2020.

Impact on financial stress of practice



'How would you describe the current financial position of your private practice?'



- GPs more likely to report practice financial stress if urban, smaller or larger
- Other specialists more likely to report financial stress if practice is larger



Image from PCHSS webinar with Professor Tony Scott

- **25 November 2020, 2-3 pm (AEST):** “Harnessing Digital Technologies to Enhance Patient Safety”; moderated by Associate Professor Farah Magrabi (PCHSS and Macquarie University). Our two speakers in this webinar were [Professor Johanna Westbrook](#) (PCHSS and Macquarie University) and Associate Professor Shlomo Berkovsky (PCHSS and Macquarie University). Professor Westbrook explained her compelling findings on the role of electronic medication management systems in significantly reducing medication error rates in paediatric hospitals (12 months after implementation, medication prescribing errors had dropped by 32% for high-risk medications). Associate Professor Berkovsky discussed his cutting-edge work on categorising frail elderly patients using AI to improve decision making about treatments for aged patients.

- **23 February 2021, 2-3 pm (AEST):** “Not yet business as usual: How are alternative models of care changing the health system and health care?”; moderated by [Professor Len Gray](#) (PCHSS and The University of Queensland). [Professor Rachelle Buchbinder](#) (PCHSS, Monash University and Cabrini Institute) will share her research on the prevalence, costs, and benefits of alternate models of care in Australia, such early discharge hospital at home and hospital avoidance at home, and Dr Tracey Tay (NSW Agency for Clinical Innovation) will talk about the *NSW Health Virtual Care Initiatives* that have been ongoing and further enhanced through the *Virtual Care Accelerator* in response to the COVID-19 pandemic. *Registration will open soon.*
- **March 2021 (Date and time TBC):** “Improving health system performance from planning to evaluating implemented health services”. This webinar will include presentations by [Professor Jon Karnon](#) (PCHSS and Flinders University) and [Associate Professor Yvonne Zurynski](#) (PCHSS and Macquarie University). Professor Karnon is a health economist and will discuss the “Embedded Economist” program, which links economists with health care managers to co-design health services for Primary Health Networks and Local Health Networks. Associate Professor Zurynski will focus on the “Embedded Evaluation” and the value of evaluations of implemented health service programs to support program sustainability. *More information about the webinar will be announced soon.*
- The final webinar in the series will be held in **April 2021**. The prospective topic for this session will be how health consumers can contribute to a more sustainable health

system. *More information about the webinar will be announced soon*

CHF Summit 2021: Shifting Gears (18-19 March 2021)

- On **18-19 March 2021**, the Consumers Health Forum of Australia (CHF) will host a virtual summit entitled “[Shifting Gears](#)”. As part of the summit, PCHSS investigators Professor Braithwaite and Associate Professor Zurynski will lead a workshop on the crucial role of consumers in creating sustainable health care systems, which will include a dynamic panel of leading consumer advocates and researchers. For more information and to register, please visit the [CHF website](#).
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Past Events

- On **23 November**, PCHSS’ Associate Professor Zurynski and Professor Braithwaite, along with Professor Frances Rapport and Dr Gaston Arnolda of the [Australian Institute of Health Innovation](#), gave a masterclass on implementation science for members of the CHF. Implementation science – sometimes described as the way to ensure a good idea gets put into practice – necessarily entails working with health consumers. In their workshop, the presenters delved into the crucial concepts of consumer engagement, co-design, and co-production; highlighted the importance of ongoing program evaluation undertaken alongside implementation; and examined three real-life examples (in child health, epilepsy and cancer care) and the role of consumers in the success of these programs.

- On **4 November**, Professor Braithwaite spoke at the [International Forum on Quality & Safety in Healthcare](#) virtual conference in the “[Reliability and Resilience. Moving from Safety-I to Safety-II](#)” session.
 - On **13 October**, Professor Karnon gave his [second presentation in the Embedded Economist Community of Practice Seminar Series](#).
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New Publications

In the past quarter, PCHSS investigators published over 50 papers, abstracts, reports, and other research works that arose from Partnership Centre funding or were related to health system sustainability. These and all our papers are available on the [Our Publications](#) page on our website. Notable recent examples of our publications include:

- [The 40 health systems, COVID-19 \(40HS, C-19\) study](#) by Jeffrey Braithwaite, Yvonne Tran, Louise Ellis, and Johanna Westbrook published in the *International Journal for Quality in Health Care*, which investigated relationships between governments’ capacity to respond to the COVID-19 pandemic, the stringency of their responses, the scope of the COVID-19 testing they made available, and COVID-19 deaths. The authors found that the best performing national cluster (comprising Australia, South Korea, Iceland, and Taiwan) adopted early stringency measures and broader testing earlier than others. These factors were associated with a change in disease trajectory and with the lowest COVID-19 death rates. The authors concluded that broad-based testing is key to managing COVID-19.

- [Mapping the learning health system: a scoping review of current evidence. A White Paper](#) by researchers at the PCHSS' Observatory on Health System Sustainability examined more than 270 publications to synthesise current understanding related to learning health systems (LHS) to inform and stimulate further development and adoption of LHSs. In the LHS model, knowledge generation is embedded in daily practice to improve patient outcomes. The very concept of an LHS is that systems are constantly adjusting, and that learning is continuous, making LHSs more of a journey than a destination. Our results revealed the need for more rigorous evaluation of health system that are adopting the LHS model, and for more focus on the factors that inhibit or enable an LHS (e.g. policies, governance, and regulations that are aligned to facilitate research, collaboration, and learning), as well as a stronger emphasis on patient, family, and carer involvement.



Mapping the learning health system: a scoping review of current evidence. A White Paper

- [Changes in public perceptions and experiences of the Australian health-care system: A decade of change](#) by

Louise Ellis, Chiara Pomare, James Gillespie, Jo Root, James Ansell, Joanna Holt, Leanne Wells, Yvonne Tran, Jeffrey Braithwaite, and Yvonne Zurynski published in *Health Expectations*, which captured changes in Australians' perceptions about their health system over the last 10 years. The research suggested that the public sees the system as having significantly improved over the last decade, but that concerns have emerged about the affordability of care, access to medicines, inadequate workforce capacity, and the quality of aged care facilities.

- [Private or Public? The declining growth in the use of private healthcare in Australia](#) by Tianshu Bai, Susan Mendez, Jongsay Yong, and Tony Scott published in Melbourne University's *Research Insights*, which examined the underlying causes of the drop in private health insurance coverage in Australia over the past five years. They reported that from 2015 to 2020 private health insurance coverage has dropped nearly 4% (with the greatest decline in coverage for younger Australians). The report discusses the implications that this change may have for private and public hospital usage and finances.
- [Reducing surgical waitlist times in Australia](#), a rapid literature review by the PCHSS' Observatory on Health System Sustainability, which examined factors affecting surgical waitlists in Australia. The paper details strategies for streamlining processes and patient journeys to address lengthy delays in elective surgeries, improving waitlist management and prioritisation strategies, and reducing low-value, high-cost care.
- [Trends, determinants and differences in antibiotic use in 68 residential aged care homes in Australia, 2014–2017: a longitudinal analysis of electronic health record data](#) by

Magdalena Raban, Kimberly Lind, Ric Day, Len Gray, Andrew Georgiou, and Johanna Westbrook published in *BMC Health Services Research*, which showed that, over the course of the study, although fewer aged care residents were prescribed antibiotics, the ones that were received a longer course. The research provides a model for using electronic health records as a data source for monitoring antibiotic use and overuse in residential aged care facilities.

- [Determining if Telehealth Can Reduce Health System Costs: Scoping Review](#) by Centaine Snoswell, Monica Taylor, Tracy Comans, Anthony Smith, Leonard Gray, and Liam Caffery published in the *Journal of Medical Internet Research*, which analysed if telehealth reduces costs to health systems compared with traditional service models. They found that although telehealth does not routinely reduce costs, it does provide positive patient benefits and increase provider productivity.

Media Engagements

Since our last newsletter, the research and commentary of PCHSS researchers have been featured in more than 70 stories in the popular press.

Here is a small sampling of news stories from the past few months:

- [Numbers show lockdowns are a 'no brainer'. Letting people die isn't](#) (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, 3 October 2020, featuring the commentary of Jon Karnon)
- [GP payment boost trial to help sustain Medicare system](#) (*The Sydney Morning Herald*, 6 October 2020, featuring the

- commentary of Tony Scott)
- [Hydroxy spurned](#) (*ABC News*, 12 October 2020, featuring the commentary of Paul Glasziou)
 - [Video and phone consultations only scratch the surface of what telehealth has to offer](#) (*The Conversation*, 12 October 2020, by Centaine Snoswell, Liam Caffery, and colleagues)
 - [Medical costs comparison website 'has little credibility among doctors and consumers' in Australia](#) (*The Guardian*, 21 October 2020, featuring the commentary of Leanne Wells)
 - [Focus on non-medical strategies in the fight against Covid](#) (*Financial Times*, 24 October 2020, featuring the commentary of Paul Glasziou)
 - [Study explains the global burden of disability from musculoskeletal conditions](#) (*News Medical Life Sciences*, 5 November 2020, highlighting recent research by Rachelle Buchbinder and colleagues)
 - [How did so many healthcare workers in Victoria contract COVID-19?](#) (*ABC TV 7.30 Report*, 10 November 2020, featuring the commentary of Jeffrey Braithwaite)
 - [When it comes to national security, artificial intelligence is a sovereign risk](#) (*Croakey*, 11 November 2020, by Enrico Coiera)
 - [Dr Tedros was right: the answer is test, test, test](#) (*Croakey*, 11 November 2020, by Jeffrey Braithwaite)
 - [Staying in touch while keeping your distance](#) (*Health Voices*, November 2020, by Jeffrey Braithwaite)
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Other News

In **November**, PCHSS investigator [Professor Helena Teede was awarded an Honorary Fellowship](#) from the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists

(RANZCOG) for her contributions to women's health through research, leadership, and mentorship.

On **17 September**, in celebration of World Patient Safety Day, the PCHSS team compiled a sampling of [our researchers' contributions to the subject of patient safety](#) over the past few years. Their outstanding contributions included:

- [It's time to step it up. Why safety investigations in healthcare should look more to safety science](#) (2020) by Jeffrey Braithwaite, Siri Wiig, and Robyn Clay-Williams, published in the *International Journal for Quality in Health Care*.
- [NSAID use among residents in 68 residential aged care facilities 2014 to 2017: An analysis of duration, concomitant medication use, and high-risk conditions](#) (2019) by Kimberly Lind, Magdalena Raban, Andrew Georgiou, and Johanna Westbrook, published in *Pharmacoepidemiology & Drug Safety*.
- [Safety and effectiveness of stoss therapy in children with vitamin D deficiency](#) (2019) by Paul Tannous, Melissa Fiscaletti, Nicholas Wood, Hasantha Gunasekera, Yvonne Zurynski, Andrew Biggin, Tatjana Kilo, Evan Hayes, Craig Munns, published *Journal of Paediatrics and Child Health*.

Contact

If you would like to partner with a stream of health system sustainability research, or you have an interest in any of the above areas of research, please [contact us](#).

Warm regards,

The Partnership Centre Team on behalf of:

Chief Investigator Professor Jeffrey Braithwaite

Founding Director, [Australian Institute of Health Innovation](#),
Macquarie University



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