

Position Statement on Cardiac Rehabilitation: Face-to-face and telehealth delivery options

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Participating in a cardiac rehabilitation program is a critical step in a person's recovery from their heart attack or heart event. However, this effective intervention¹ is underutilised in Australia. Many people who could potentially benefit are not referred and are not given the opportunity to participate.

The COVID-19 pandemic has accelerated the uptake and utilisation of telehealth and digital technologies. The Heart Foundation and Australian Cardiovascular Health and Rehabilitation Association welcomes the use of telehealth and innovations in referral and service delivery models that improve access to cardiac rehabilitation. Telehealth and home-based interventions with a range of delivery modes can be offered to patients who cannot attend cardiac rehabilitation, or as an adjunct to cardiac rehabilitation for effective secondary prevention²⁻⁵.

Where appropriate, telehealth can be a safe, effective and efficient tool to support healthcare delivery. Offering choice in cardiac rehabilitation service delivery models is important however, telehealth should not be used solely to replace face-to-face care, but rather, compliment it. Those recovering from a heart event frequently praise the benefits of peer support and participating in a group environment⁶. It is reassuring to see the resumption of many cardiac rehabilitation services across Australia as the country responds to COVID 19. With more service delivery models on offer, hopefully more Australians can benefit from cardiac rehabilitation.

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