



## Helping Medibank to give patients up-to-date health information through effective digital triage

Medibank Health Solutions provides clinical, technological and operational capabilities across Australia. Telephone-based patient assessment is revolutionising healthcare across the world and in 2020, supported by Capita Healthcare Decisions' Teletriage programme, known as TeleGuides,

Medibank provided more than 2.5 million telephone and digital health interactions. This helped 350 triage nurses, 43 GPs and 406 mental health professionals to make the most appropriate decisions for their patients. It also supported 1.3 million hospital admissions and 500,000 surgical procedures.

## Enabling greater sharing of expertise by realigning and advanced algorithms

TeleGuides uses inbuilt logic to take the clinician or call handler through a series of questions, using sophisticated algorithms. Medibank had been using TeleGuides to support multiple healthcare clients across Australia, and over time had customised them to reflect country-specific factors. For example, it had made a series of changes to the algorithms it used to assess different conditions, such as fever or abdominal pain.

However, this meant that our team at Capita Healthcare Decisions (CHD) was unable to make software updates and therefore Medibank's own version of TeleGuides was drifting from the original base set content. This in turn made it hard for Medibank to benchmark itself against international standards of best practice and it was also unable to contribute expertise to help improve the algorithms.

Dr Robert McGrath, senior executive medical director of health services and health informatics at Medibank, wanted to improve collaboration with CHD, re-align content and help to contribute to an international set of algorithms. Dr McGrath also felt that Medibank could contribute its own expertise to the global content.

**“ We have expertise in Australia that other countries don't have, such as marine stings and snakes. A lot of evidence comes out of Australia that would help us to add specific content and contribute to a set of algorithms that everyone could use.”**

Dr McGrath



## Delivering a complex project across time zones with flexibility and commitment

Our team worked closely with Medibank to document the areas where amendments had been made and align the content to the most current version and associated global best practice. Our collaboration was vital, and despite the different time zones, the project was completed on time and on budget. We retained all elements which were necessary for the Australian geography and were specific to Medibank's requirements.

Crucial to the success of the project was using feedback from nurses to make amendments to algorithms. Dr McGrath says: “Previously, we would get feedback from our nurses where they thought algorithms could do with improving and we would make the modifications, but CHD wouldn't know about the changes.”

**“ Closer alignment with CHD now gives us the opportunity to work together, give our feedback for them to consider through their editorial processes and then come up with a solution that is best for both of us.”**

Dr McGrath

The company now has more opportunities and flexibility for the future, giving it the ability to add website guides and web-based symptom checkers that can align to its specific TeleGuides more closely. This will result in a smoother transition between self-guide and any consequent assessment from a nurse and provide greater continuity.







## Ensuring a smooth transition through good communication and adaptability

The success of the project was reliant on adaptability from both sides. The original plan was to make the changes in batches and upload them on completion for peer review. However, it was quickly decided that a rolling process would be better, using a bespoke online platform to allow testing, with requests for changes reviewed and implemented on a regular basis. This helped to improve communication between teams and enabled the changes to be discussed effectively and on time.

The platform is used by nurses to access the algorithms and retrieve assessments, as well as being used to translate dispositions arriving from CHD into particular Australian contracts. This means individual programs can be customised.

In addition to realigning the TeleGuides, it was necessary to upgrade the underlying decision support technology that delivers the content into the respective front-end solutions via the Application Programming Interface (API). Medibank needed the latest supported solution to ensure they were protected from any issues with content presentation or delivery. As the company was using a very old version of the DMS API product, it was necessary to switch to the Salus API.

Salus API is a REST based API capable of surfacing our comprehensive clinical decision support content into any front end device and enabling providers to enhance their healthcare service provision. Salus API is highly scalable, functional and offers a customisable interface into our clinical content, allowing for easy, full integration of our clinical content into your existing platform, whether this is a website, mobile app, electronic health record, contact centre solution, customer relationship management or proprietary solution. This enables users to surface the information they need, within the workflows of choice, when they need it, in the most beneficial and effective way.

## Improving performance through continuous monitoring

The main purpose of the TeleGuides service is to direct patients along the most appropriate pathway to receive healthcare. By continuously monitoring the algorithms and outcomes it will be possible to fine tune the system to make sure it is operating as efficiently as possible.

One of the main considerations is call handling time. Dr McGrath says: “The efficiency of our nurses and the number of calls they can get through has a direct impact on cost of service and therefore the value of what they are doing.”

“We’ve been monitoring this closely and noticed some ups and downs with different algorithms. We’re giving it time to settle, but there will come a time that if call times are still longer than they used to be, we will be able to look at what is driving that.”

Dr McGrath

Under the new system, Medibank doesn’t have to deal with it alone and can pass it to CHD to investigate from an editorial point of view, making any changes together with safety in mind. Dr McGrath is pleased with progress to date and believes the cooperative working relationship coupled with the flexible approach adopted by CHD has meant that Medibank is now providing its customers with the most up to date information on which triage decisions can be made.





**To find out more, please get in touch**

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