

Personify Care and Grampians Integrated Cancer Service Co-design Cancer Care Pathway

Background

Grampians Integrated Cancer Service (GICS) works to improve experiences and outcomes of cancer care, working in partnership with the community, public and private health providers across the Grampians region, in Victoria. It covers a region of almost 50,000 square kilometres and a population of almost 220,000 people.

In early 2020, Glenn Reeves, a representative of GICS, approached Personify Care with an exciting [study](#)* which demonstrated positive results from the monitoring of cancer patients via patient reported outcome measures (PROMs).

This study has attracted high global regard and has been influential in the uptake of PROMs across medical specialties. It showed that monitoring PROMs in cancer care can:

- Decrease emergency visits by 7%
- Decrease hospitalisations by 4%
- Improve quality of life in patients by 16%
- 30% more patients could stay on treatment

This study proved the effectiveness of patients self-reporting symptoms during cancer treatment, particularly during chemotherapy.

"They had significant differences between the two groups, in regards to hospitalisations had dropped, emergency department visits had dropped, people could stay on treatment longer, patient wellbeing was a lot better."

The kicker was that, through this study, the 1-year survival rate increased significantly."

GLENN REEVES
PROJECT LEAD AT GICS

Leveraging the Personify Care platform, GICS is now running a similar study to determine whether clinical teams with visibility to PROMs, via digital pathways, can enhance the care experience and health outcomes for cancer patients in regional communities.

*Ethan Basch, Allison M Deal, Mark G Kris, Howard I Scher, Clifford A Hudis, Paul Sabbatini, Lauren Rogak, Antonia V Bennett, Amylou C Dueck, Thomas M Atkinson, Joanne F Chou, Dorothy Dulko, Laura Sit, Allison Barz, Paul Novotny, Michael Fruscione, Jeff A Sloan, Deborah Schrag, 2015 Dec 7, Symptom Monitoring With Patient-Reported Outcomes During Routine Cancer Treatment: A Randomized Controlled Trial

“Traditionally, when a patient has treatment, they’re given a contact card and asked to call if they’re experiencing difficulties or having symptoms. It’s a very reactive approach and patients often don’t make that call when they should.

This can have serious implications downstream; they can end up in the ED, they could be hospitalised, they might not be able to continue their treatment as planned. It’s not good for their overall outcomes. When I came across this research, I thought surely there’s a much more proactive approach, where you can use technology to reach out to the patients and ask them questions about how they’re feeling. That’s where it started.”

GLENN REEVES
PROJECT LEAD AT GICS



The smsPRO Project

From this initial New York based study, GICS smsPRO Project was born. The project concept was reviewed initially by GICS Consumer Advisory Group and subsequently a Steering Committee was established, comprising key clinicians and consumers, and the go ahead given.

The foundation of the project was underpinned by the technology that would be used to monitor PROMs, and in 2020 three health technology vendors were approached to tender for the project.

From these three vendors, Personify Care was selected on the basis of:

- Data privacy/security;
- Ease of use;
- Ability to be customise, so the service provider could get exactly what they want, instead of shoehorning something to fit their needs.

Project Objective

“This project aims to assess the acceptability and feasibility of using online questionnaires to improve communication between health service staff and community-based cancer patients living in the Grampians region.”

Study Question

“Can an online system for gathering Patient Reported Outcomes from community-based cancer patients be implemented within current service provider frameworks?”

Six clinical departments across 4 sites in the Grampians region were selected to participate in the study, which involves digital collection of PROMs, remote monitoring of patient responses and clinical intervention where required.

Patients receiving community-based cancer care from one of these 6 departments will be invited to enrol in the study and then registered to the Personify Care platform.

Patients will receive notifications via text message to complete timely questionnaires, allowing clinicians to digitally capture the patient's perception of their own health symptoms.

The Study Sites

1. Ballarat Health Services (PCN)
2. Ballarat Health Services (BCN)
3. Ballarat Health Services (Oncology Dietetics)
4. Wimmera Health Care Group (WHCG)
5. East Grampians Health Service (EGHS)
6. Stawell Regional Health (SRH)



The Role of the Ethics Committee and Consumer Advisory Board.

The Consumer Advisory Group (CAG) has 10 members who have been involved in and have supported the project from the beginning.

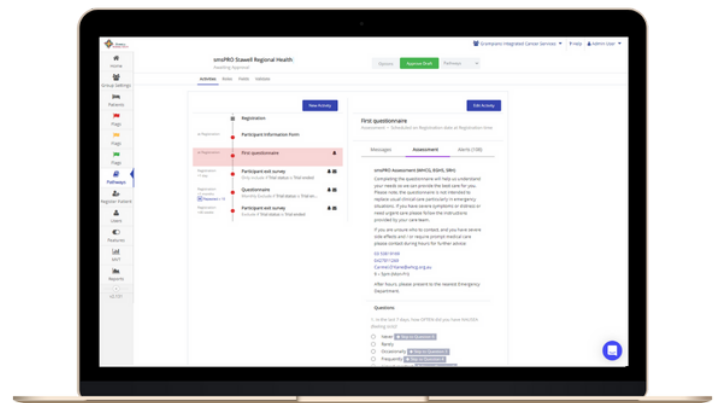
The project was also approved by the GICS steering committee, who provided valuable input on ethics and critical feedback on consumer perspective regarding usability, simplicity and protection of patient wellness.

Glenn and Personify Care have worked closely for the last 18 months with the different clinicians and staff members involved in the project, to develop a clinical workflow that's approved by the CAG's expertise.

The feedback from both the CAG and steering committees have been a key driver in the design of the project.

"Although we have 6 different departments, the core framework is very similar. They all have a landing page, a questionnaire, an onboarding process. The CAG was crucial in providing us that feedback in the design process."

GLENN REEVES
PROJECT LEAD AT GICS



Designing a Pathway; Turning the Protocol Into Something the Patient Can Use.

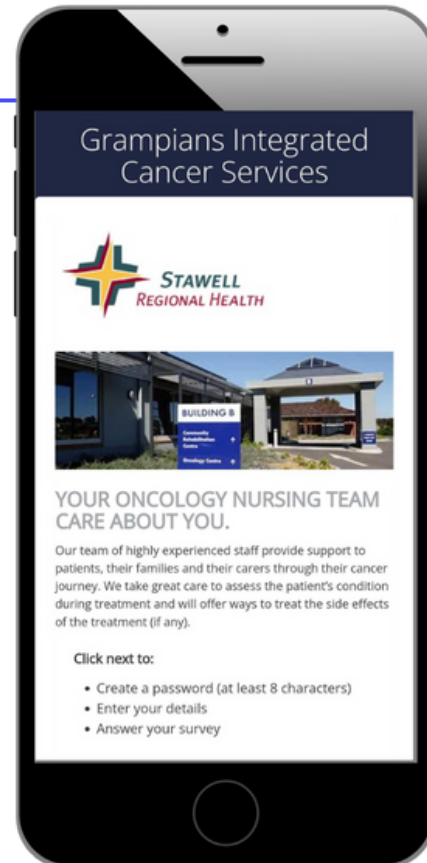
Converting GICS project requirements into a usable digital patient pathway was a four-step process.

01

Personify Care's novel approach to co-design started with a thorough understanding of the current workflows of the 6 participating departments, and the interactions between the clinicians in these departments and their patients. The objective was not to change the existing protocols and processes, just simply to introduce technology at the current interaction points.

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Once these workflows were mapped, the Personify Care team then worked closely with GICS to build the digital pathways on the Personify Care platform. This included creating the various questionnaires, which were specific to each department and specialty, and setting up the risk alerts logic that allow clinicians to provide intervention at the appropriate time.



"One of the reasons we started the company was that we saw this incredible body of evidence across a whole range of specialties about models of care and ways of improving patient outcomes that was proven in the research world, but was a completely different thing to translate into the real world."

KEN SAMAN
CEO AT PERSONIFY CARE

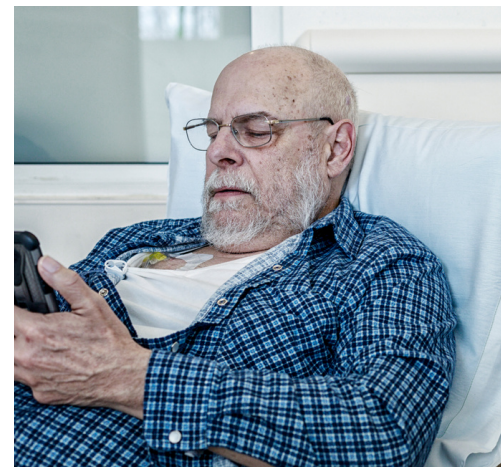
03

These pathways were then tested, feedback collected from each department and changes implemented.

04

Personify Care and Glenn provided comprehensive training to each site's participants on how to provide consent and manage their patients prior to patient registration start date.

This onboarding process is designed to be ready in 4 weeks, so it can be rapidly deployed within the workflows of the team.



Consumer Experience

Flow of the patient



The patient has time to think about it.

They meet the clinician face-to-face at their regular appointment and receive information about the program.

If they agree at their next appointment then they get invited to Personify Care (via phone number).

Patient receives a text message, with a link to Personify Care. They then enter their details to start their patient account.

Once their patient account is complete and they consent to sharing their details, then the first digital activity is the consent form, which they can electronically sign in their account.

Once this is completed, the trial starts and the patient is given a PROMs survey (repeated monthly with an SMS notification).

Benefits of the Technology

GICS faced a challenge common across many healthcare teams - how to be more efficient without additional resources.

With Personify Care's technology, clinicians can register patients to the platform while allowing automatic progression along their health journey, with automatic notifications, questionnaires and information as required.

The platform's risk traffic light system automatically flags the patient as green, yellow or red, to indicate the level of care the patient needs, depending on how they've responded to their regular progress questionnaires. This technology helps clinicians to prioritise patients and spend more time administering high-value care on high priority cases. It also helps clinicians organise how they're going to escalate the care their patients need as well as their own day-to-day workload.

"In a regional setting, that friction of patients reaching out to their clinicians is a lot higher than in a metro setting. The resources of those clinicians and cancer nurses are more stretched in those regional settings."

KEN SAMAN
CEO AT PERSONIFY CARE

This model of care has far reaching implications for regional patients, as the technology enables the health service to monitor patients remotely, in real-time. Clinicians can digitally monitor their patients via PROMs surveys and configure alerts to be triggered based on their own clinical protocols. This means community-based regional patients remain connected to their health service, without having to travel great distances for in-person appointments or needing additional staffing resources for screening calls whilst still receiving timely care and appropriate intervention.

The Future

The SMSpro Project has been through a thorough ethical and governance approval process, has worked to co-design the digital patient pathway and has gathered feedback from the 6 participating departments and various committees involved.

The project is now in the midst of its 8 month recruitment window, which will shortly conclude and the study's intervention window will begin.

If successful, the model of care used in this study could be adopted widely by other health organisations and departments and has the potential to improve the health outcomes of community-based and remote patients.

"We're trying to use this technology to try and streamline, so by the end of the trial I want to be at the point where all the departments want to continue using this. The other challenge with the health system is that, if you have a good idea, but no proof, then it's hard to get funding and backing to continue the project. Here we've made it really accessible for providers to build a business case for this type of tech and introduce it into their ongoing processes."

GLENN REEVES
PROJECT LEAD AT GICS