**Protocol**

**A rapid literature review to identify equity issues in access and delivery of virtual care interventions.**

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**RPA Virtual Hospital (rpavirtual), SLHD**

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# Background

During the COVID-19 pandemic in 2020 many health services rapidly pivoted to virtual care as an emergency method of reaching their clients. The restriction of in-person health services and the rapid implementation of telehealth has been driven by necessity but also presents a significant opportunity [1].

RPA Virtual Hospital (rpavirtual) launched in February 2020. While it was planned before the outbreak of COVID-19 it has been central in pivoting to provide telehealth during the pandemic. The delivery of telehealth services will continue to develop and grow within Sydney Local Health District (SLHD).

There is a growing body of studies being carried out on the expansion of virtual care interventions, particularly in relation to the COVID-19 pandemic [2, 3] but the equity issues related to the virtual care intervention have not been adequately explored and summarised. This review aimed to consolidate and synthesise knowledge about equity issues in access and delivery of virtual care interventions and to investigate the international literature related to equity issues in virtual care programs to consider virtual care strategies that may be adopted by rpavirtual.

# Proposed Approach

This scoping review was conducted following the guidelines of PRISMA-ScR (Preferred Reporting Items for Systematic Reviews and Meta-analysis extension for Scoping Reviews) [4]. The main search databases will be included are Medline, EMBASE and CINAHL and the time-period covered will be January 2010 to January 2021. Articles revealed from the database search will be assessed based on predetermined inclusion and exclusion criteria and articles will selected for review (Table 1).

Table 1 Inclusion and exclusion criteria

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| --- |
| Inclusion criteria |
| * Published in English |
| * Published between January 2010 and December 2020 |
| * Studies exploring equity in ambulatory services offered via telemedicine |
| * Carried out in OECD countries |
| * Empirical studies |
| Exclusion criteria |
| * Published in language other than English |
| * Published before January 2010 |
| * Studies not exploring equity in ambulatory services offered via telemedicine |
| * Studies exploring robotic/tele-surgery |
| * Studies carried outside OECD countries |
| * Commentary/review/opinion pieces |

### Data extraction

The data will be extracted from the included studies in a Microsoft Excel template developed by the authors. Information such as country, study setting, study design, study participants, characteristics of the intervention/study, type of telehealth virtual care modalities, type of equity issues identified/addressed, main findings, summary of the result and relevance to RPA rpavirtual were extracted.

### Data synthesis

Data synthesis will involve:

1. Thematic analysis of data extraction

2. Comparing and contrasting findings from different studies

3. Using findings from studies to address review questions

5. Developing narrative and recommendations in the light of evidence

6. Findings analysed and synthesized

### Review stages

The stages of this review would include defining the scope of the review; searching for and scrutinising the evidence and examples; extracting and synthesising the evidence; and developing evidence narrative and recommendation for practice. Given the short timeframes and available resources for the review a rapid review approach will be used, and expert knowledge and key stakeholders will be incorporated into the review process to ensure that key literature and examples of good practice that may not be captured using traditional search engines and rapid review processes are identified. The project plan will be developed in collaboration with rpavirtual. We will develop specific search strategy including specific conditions for which virtual care services are being provided that we are going to focus on our review. Project steps are listed below.

### References

1. Harris-Roxas B. The impact and effectiveness of equity focused health impact assessment in health service planning: Ben Harris-Roxas; 2014.

2. Fisk M, Livingstone A, Pit SW. Telehealth in the context of COVID-19: changing perspectives in Australia, the United Kingdom, and the United States. Journal of medical Internet research. 2020;22(6):e19264.

3. Monaghesh E, Hajizadeh A. The role of telehealth during COVID-19 outbreak: a systematic review based on current evidence. BMC Public Health. 2020;20(1):1-9.

4. Tricco AC, Lillie E, Zarin W, O'Brien KK, Colquhoun H, Levac D, et al. PRISMA extension for scoping reviews (PRISMA-ScR): checklist and explanation. Annals of internal medicine. 2018;169(7):467-73.