

# Year One Reflections

Partnership, Equity,  
and Continuity



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Practice Plus has been developed between Tū Ora Compass, Pinnacle Health, THINK Hauora, Pegasus Health and Te Awakairangi Health Network to increase access options for primary care.

We have developed a telehealth service in partnership with our clinician network to secure continuity of care between a virtual clinical service and a patient's regular clinical team.

# Extending Primary Care

Practice Plus opened its virtual doors on the 8 February 2022 and has been operating for 1 year!

Our values are Partnership, Equity, and Continuity of Care.

Practice Plus provides telehealth (both video and phone) consultations to provide after hours care for patients, placed as an extension to general practice, to complement and collaborate rather than compete. If practices are lacking capacity, they have a trusted partner to refer patients to.

The service has also grown to offer an in hours dedicated locum service for general practices to have exclusive access to sessions with a Practice Plus clinician, with an appointment book designated for only their patients.

This report is a summary of our first year. It highlights the growing number of practices who have signed up for Practice Plus. It provides utilisation data by patient type and feedback from both clinician and patients on service satisfaction.

“The service has developed and evolved rapidly and responsively. It’s certainly supported a very challenged general practice environment, and feedback from key partners reflects a strong willingness from Practice Plus to operate in a continuous improvement model”

PHO Partner

200+

PRACTICES INVOLVED

1.5M

ENROLLED PATIENTS

## Partnership

### GENERAL PRACTICES

There are over 200 practices involved in the service with coverage of approximately 1.5 million enrolled population across a number of PHOs;

Tū Ora Compass

Pinnacle Health Network

THINK Hauora

Te Awakairangi Health Network

East Health PHO

Auckland PHO

Marlborough PHO

Pegasus Health

The service continues to hold an open dialogue with practices, discussing patients and management, and referring to the enrolled provider if a patient requires re-engagement with primary care.

### CLINICAL SERVICE PROVISION

The clinical service delivery is provided by a suite of clinicians; including General Practitioners, Urgent Care Clinicians and Nurse Practitioners. This is overlaid by robust clinical governance processes and quality assurance policies. Practice Plus are now also recruiting their own clinicians to up-scale the in-hours service provision offering in 2023.

# Equity

We continue to strive to reduce barriers to healthcare which we know inequitably affect certain individuals and whānau in Aotearoa.

This is embedded in the Equity Strategy developed and includes a number of service measures and objectives to ensure the service achieves equitable health outcomes. A snapshot of these include:

Nature of telehealth—ensuring timely access to care, reducing cost of transportation and time required to take off work as well as reducing waiting time and allowing whānau involvement in care

Consulting after hours, on weekends and on public holidays to extend access for whānau

Honouring CSC card subsidy of \$19.50 for CSC card holders and their dependents

Coupon functionality to give discounted or free consults to patients

Reporting on CSC card status, quintile, ethnicity, gender, and rurality location in regard to presentations and clinical outcomes

Patient choice of telehealth modality, with patients choosing to have either a consultation via video, mobile or landline, meaning whānau are able to access our service regardless whether they have data, wi-fi or reception

Communications and resources available in English, Māori, and Pacific Languages

Access to translation services during the consultation

Outreach events in high needs communities

A support team to guide patients through the booking platform if required

# Continuity of Care

Practice Plus works as an extension of general practice with an emphasis on maintaining the patient's primary relationship with their enrolled general practice (GP) for continuity of care.

Some principles implemented to ensure continuity of care:

Same day booking, to aim for acute, sub-acute presentations and encourage booking with their own provider for routine needs

Electronic access to hospital/shared care summaries for informational continuity

Repeat Script Policy to ensure patients do not continue to receive ongoing repeat prescriptions from Practice Plus

All consultation notes and investigations are sent to the enrolled GP

Patient enrolled provider phoned directly in hours the following day if there are any specific clinical concerns for a patient requiring immediate follow up

Enrolment support for patients unable to find a general practice to enrol with



# Designated Practice Virtual Locum

Initially the Practice Plus service focussed on after hours telehealth service provision. With some partnered practices incredibly low on clinician capacity, we identified a demand for sessions to be designated to one practice only.

Practices have been able to book sessions with a telehealth locum, in which the practice has exclusive access to that sessions booking template, and are able to book their enrolled population in.

For designated practice locums, the clinician is set up with access to the practices patient management system (PMS) allowing full access to patient history and notes. The Practice Plus locum will complete all referrals and request in our own PMS, which means the practice does not have to follow a lengthy set up process (e.g. no need to register a new doctor with Labs, ACC, BPAC etc).

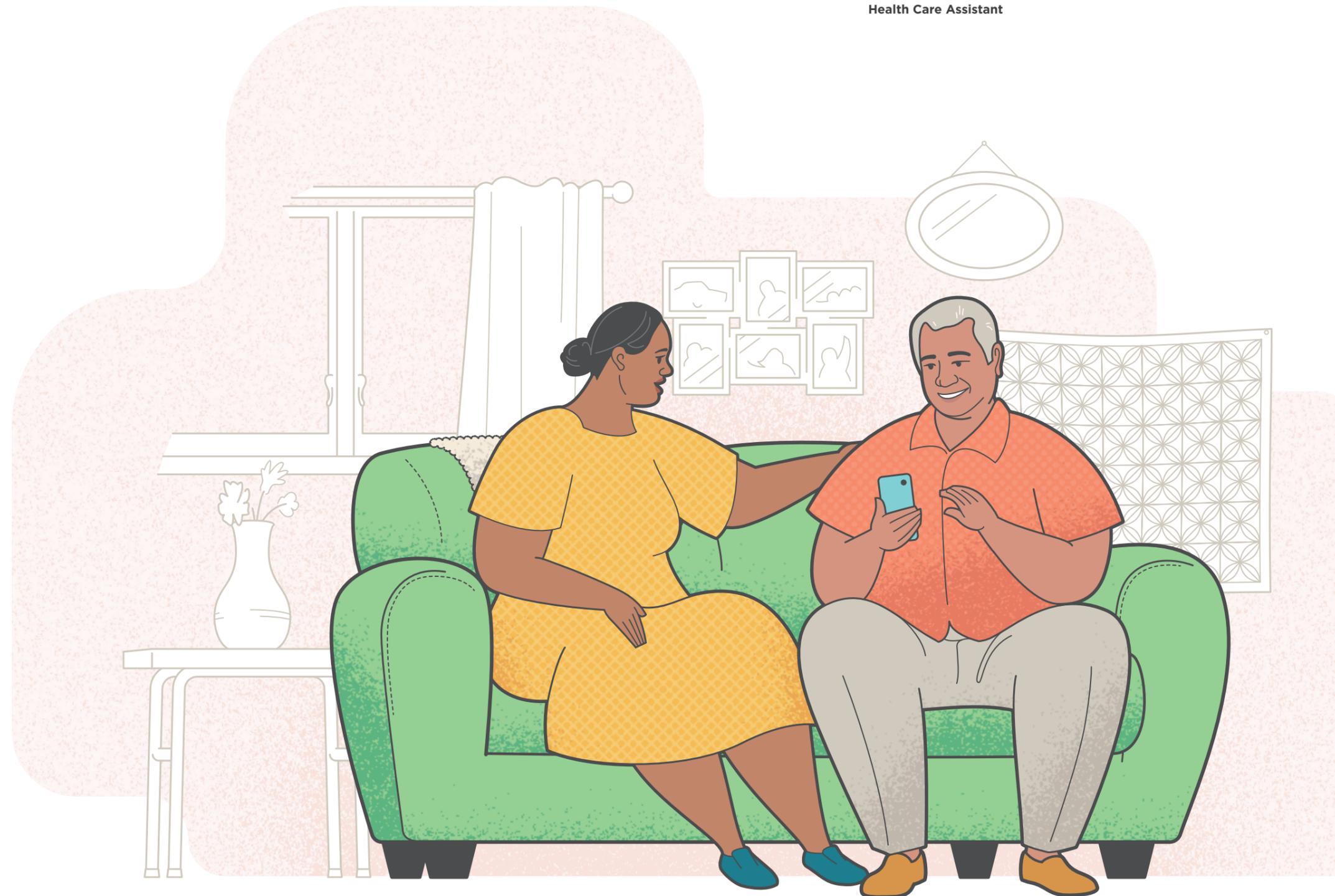
The practice pays Practice Plus per hour, and charges patients as they normally would through their own PMS.

This service has been successful in helping multiple practices across the motu, including rural practices with low capacity, allowing a GP to enjoy some much-deserved leave, and also able to step in last minute to assist a practice with a bereavement.

We continue to recruit clinicians to develop this service arm further; to be able to offer to more practices into our second year.

“It has been really good to have Practice Plus as an option for our patients when the demand for appointments exceeds our capacity. A service that works, is reliable and accessible”

Health Care Assistant



“The Practice Plus Team are fantastic — from organising in-clinic hours, discussing administration/workflow, communicating with our team and of course the fabulous clinicians dealing with our patients. Our patients have really benefitted from us being able to offer this service to them and we are grateful that we’ve had Practice Plus available as a resource, it has definitely taken the pressure off our team”

Practice Manager

# Meet our Team

## Leadership



GENERAL MANAGER  
Jess White



CLINICAL DIRECTOR  
Dr Emma Calvert



OPERATIONS LEAD  
Tristan Santer

## Clinical Team

Our clinical team are spread across the motu starting from Northland, spreading all the way down to Christchurch

The team is made up of General Practitioners, Urgent Care Specialists, and Nurse Practitioners practicing with full general practice clinical scope. Clinicians have access to full training and orientation, weekly peer support, regular audits and review of clinical practice and guidelines. We have a comprehensive administration and IT support team covering in business and after hours for both patients, practices and pharmacies.

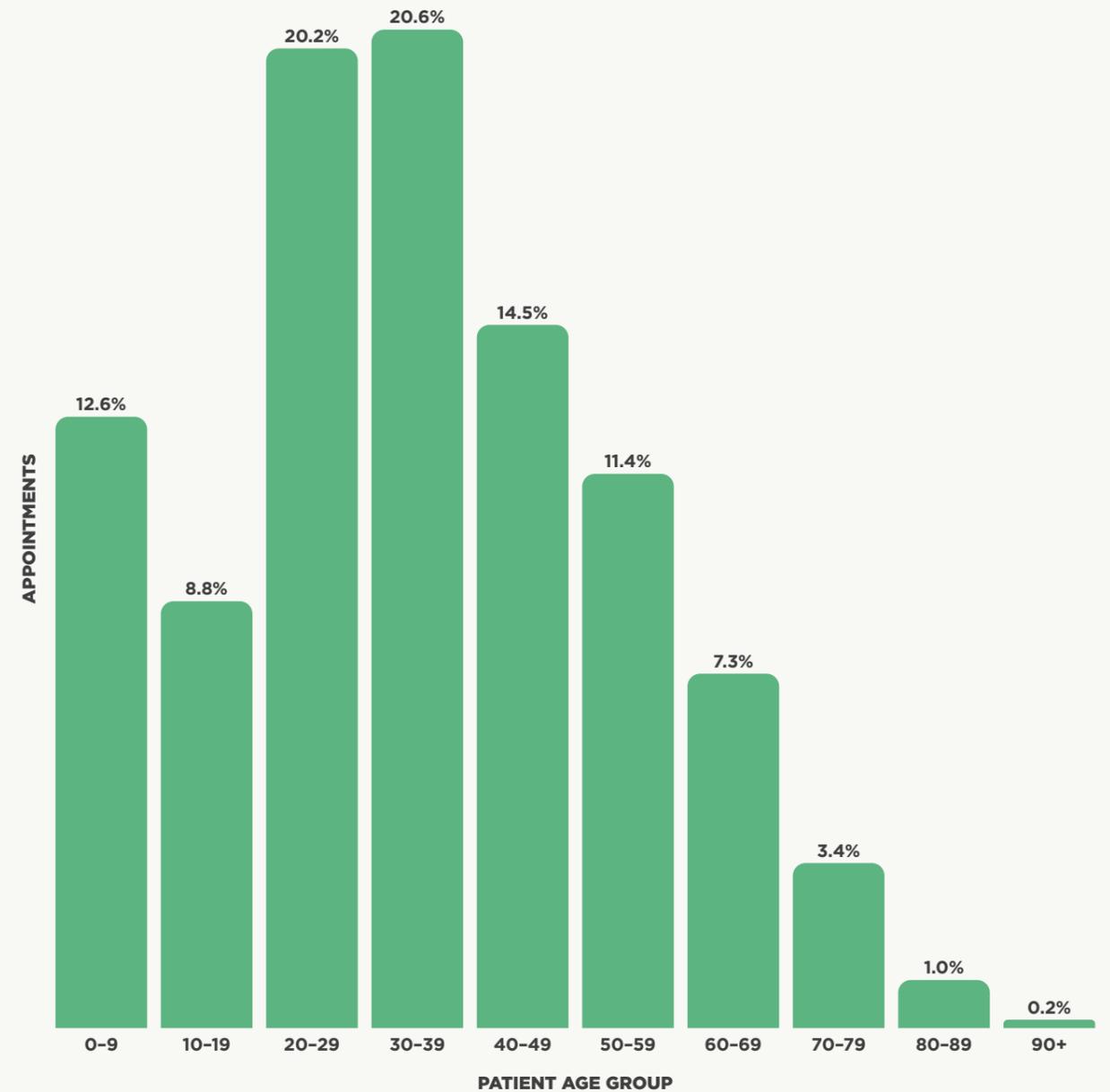
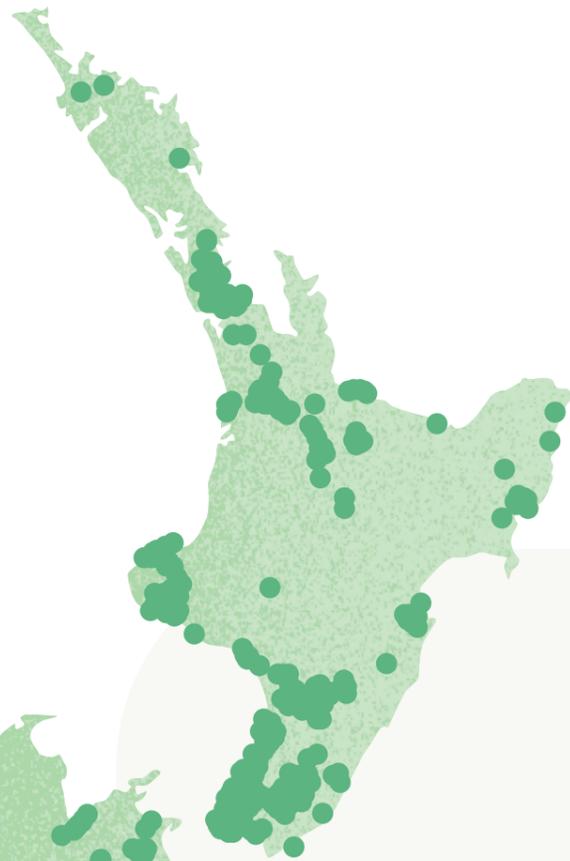
# Appointment Demographics

Patients were assessed by telehealth modalities such as telephone or video consultations from their homes, care facilities, pharmacies, and community outreach events all across the motu.

Patients from Invercargill, up to Kaitaia were able to access a same day appointment with a trusted provider through Practice Plus.

Patients from 534 different practices accessed Practice Plus, representing 31 different PHOs. By having access and integration with a wide breadth of information sharing platforms, along with electronic referrals and laboratory testing, it ensures patients can receive a standard level of care and data access wherever they are based in the country.

Over 300 appointments have been completed with patients over the age of 70, with some patients even being over 90 years. The most common age presentation is between 20-40 years.



534

PRACTICES' PATIENTS  
ACCESSED PRACTICE PLUS

300+

APPOINTMENTS WITH  
PATIENTS OVER 70

20-40

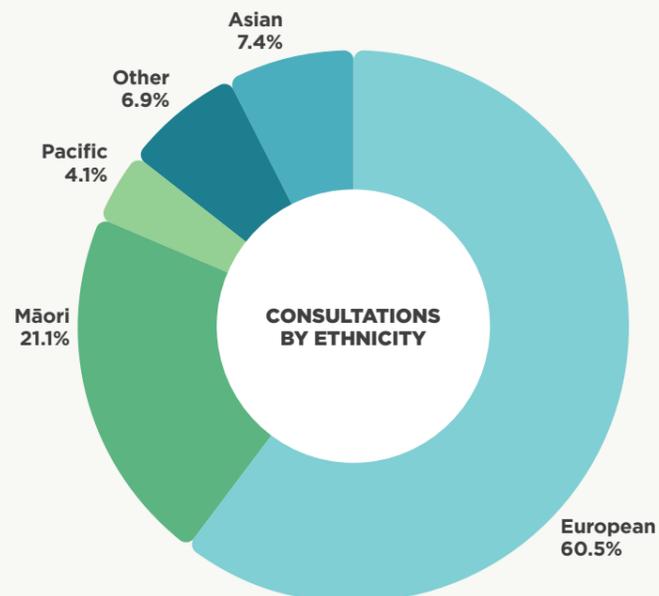
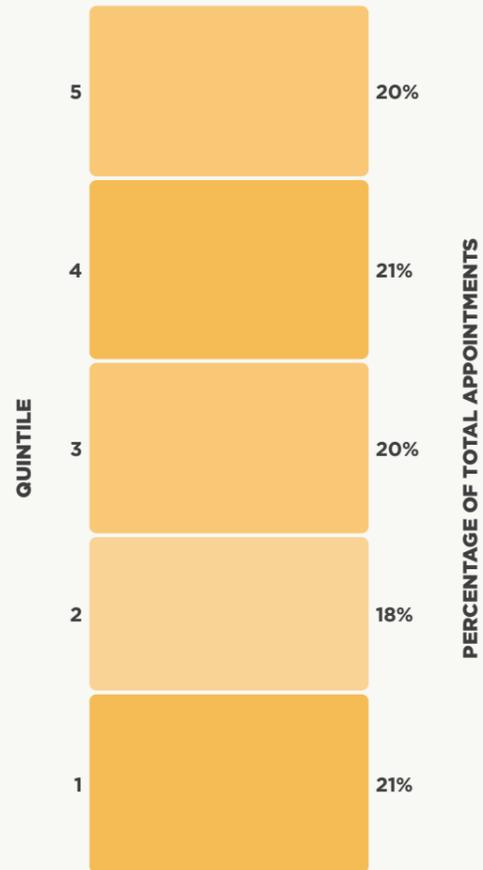
MOST COMMON PATIENT  
AGE GROUP PRESENTATION

# 12%

**OF APPOINTMENTS ARE FOR PATIENTS ENROLLED IN RURAL GENERAL PRACTICES**

Over 40% of consultations were for patient residing in a Quintile 4 or 5 area.

Over 25% of consultations were for Māori or Pasifika whānau, and we continue to focus on increasing this by implementing the Equity Strategy.



“I highly recommend using this service for you or your whānau. I was rapt with the service my girl got when we went through the online doc appt. Doctor was amazing and because my kids’ reo rangatira is reo Māori he did the whole appointment in reo Māori”

**Patient feedback**

# 23%+

**OF PATIENTS WITH A COMMUNITY SERVICES CARD UTILISING THE DISCOUNTED ACCESS RATE.**

# Appointment Outcomes

Practice Plus aims to 'resolve' and provide assessment and management to as many patients as possible, within the limitations of telehealth.

We maintain a steady 'resolution' rate of 90% of all consultation seen. Our clinicians are trained and proficient in understanding the advantages but also the limitations of telehealth, and will refer the patient for an in-person assessment if required.

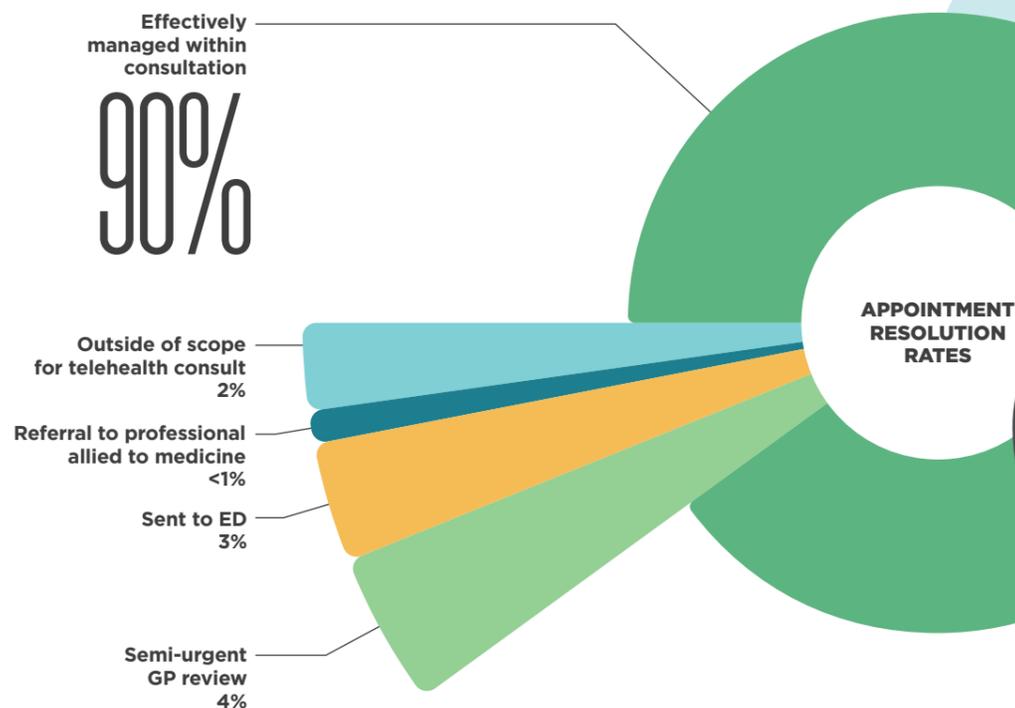
For some patients this is a visit to their enrolled GP within a week, while some interim blood tests are arranged to help with diagnosis, for some this is an emergency ambulance called that day to take them to hospital.

90% of appointments are effectively managed within consultation.

3% completed their assessment, but afterwards still required further acute review and were sent to emergency department.

4% requiring a follow up GP visit for investigations or in person review within one week

2% of consultations were unsuitable for telehealth, with the patient and clinician agreeing an in-person assessment was required. Patients are refunded in this instance. For example, a 70 year old patient presenting with vertigo, complex medical history, needing in person examination and assessment to determine cause.



“The increase in appointment uptake and positive feedback we are getting is fantastic.

We are continually referring to the service, and there has been an increase in onsite consults.

From the patient perspective — It’s been really well received, especially by patients who otherwise would have gone to the Hospital Emergency Department.

It really is making a difference in the community. We are already thinking what’s next for our partnership; in terms of the demand coming winter and being well prepared”

Brooke McKay  
Pharmacist

# Clinical Summary

## Prescribing

Medication prescribing follows typical trends of general practice and after hours service providers. Policies determine suitable quantities of medications are prescribed and patients need to return to their enrolled provider for regular ongoing prescriptions.

Practice Plus has access to Clinical Pharmacists and local HealthPathways across the motu to assist with prescribing in different regions. The policies developed around controlled drug prescribing have been through quality assurance systems for review and approval and also through the Practice Advisory Committee.

## Accidents and WINZ

If clinically suitable, and clinicians have sufficient access to information, then ACC and WINZ certificates can be completed electronically.

126

ACC18 COMPLETED

60

WINZ CERTIFICATES COMPLETED



# Lab Requests

Practice Plus requests investigations if clinically indicated, and only when pertaining to the investigation and management of the current presentation. The enrolled general practice will be copied into the result.

Practice Plus will alert the patient of their results and take any immediate actions if required. This includes the communication of normal test results. Some non-urgent results may be passed on to the GP to arrange follow up e.g. slightly abnormal Liver Function Tests. The GP will be directly notified in this case, by either inbox document (if non-urgent) or phone call (if urgent). All actions from investigations will be sent to the enrolled GP.



# Presenting Complaints and Diagnoses

Practice Plus reviews patients with a variety of presentations.

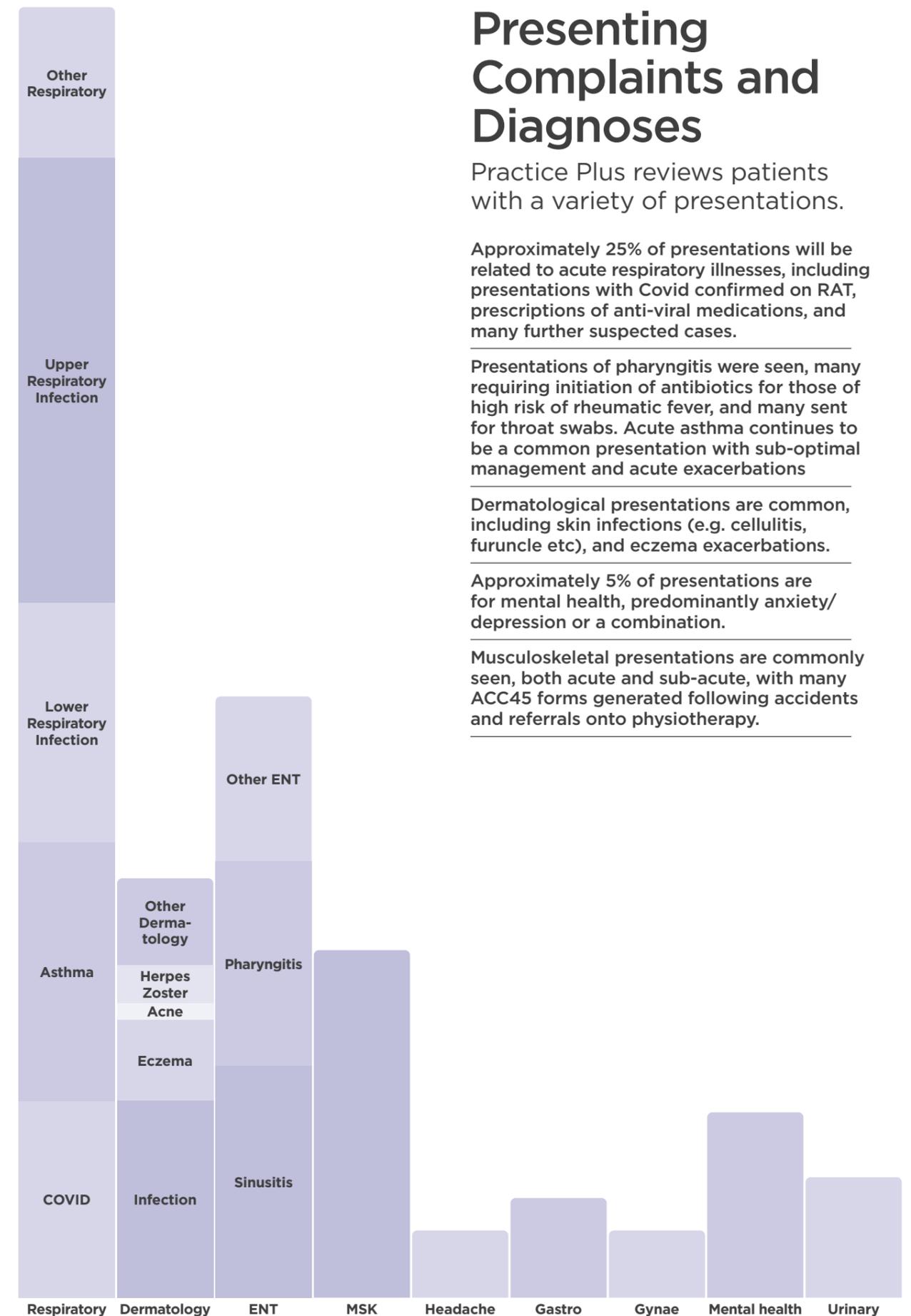
Approximately 25% of presentations will be related to acute respiratory illnesses, including presentations with Covid confirmed on RAT, prescriptions of anti-viral medications, and many further suspected cases.

Presentations of pharyngitis were seen, many requiring initiation of antibiotics for those of high risk of rheumatic fever, and many sent for throat swabs. Acute asthma continues to be a common presentation with sub-optimal management and acute exacerbations

Dermatological presentations are common, including skin infections (e.g. cellulitis, furuncle etc), and eczema exacerbations.

Approximately 5% of presentations are for mental health, predominantly anxiety/depression or a combination.

Musculoskeletal presentations are commonly seen, both acute and sub-acute, with many ACC45 forms generated following accidents and referrals onto physiotherapy.



## Patient Experience

Practice Plus steadily holds a 4.6–4.8 average star rating out of 5. The service receives regular feedback from patients, as there is opportunity to leave feedback after every consultation.

“First time user and received very quick service (about an hour after I registered). Doctor was fantastic”

“Very efficient and helpful. Easy to use — thank you! A great option for when my doctor wasn’t available”

“Wow. I wish I knew about this service earlier. Been bed ridden for 4 days. Couldn’t get into my doctor for 3 weeks. Sister suggested I try this service. Doctor was amazing. Had a script to my local pharmacy before call was over. He was so understanding and professional. The comms from Practice Plus have been awesome, via email and text. Video was clear and link worked straight away. Can’t fault this service. Just wish I knew about it sooner. Would recommend! Also the cost is roughly the same as seeing my doctor so no qualms there either”

“Great service and great use of Te Reo Māori, ngā mihi nui”

“What a fantastic service you provide. The doctor I had consultation with was super helpful, very easy to talk to. Highly recommending this service to family and friends”

“I just wanted to say thank you for running such a great initiative. I came across Practice Plus a couple of days ago after struggling to find a medical centre open over Christmas. Your website is easy to use, the appointment reminders helpful and the doctor I saw was absolutely fantastic. I’ll be recommending practice plus to everyone”

“The practice plus system was easy to use and the doctor was absolutely fantastic. He was ready for the appointment early, friendly and professional throughout, and very helpful recommending not only the medication I needed but also what training I could do in the meantime. The consultation was best experience I’ve had with a doctor that I can recall”

“Thank you. Communication pre, during and post my appointment was fantastic. The set up to speak with a Dr was a super easy link”

# Patient Journeys

Sarah\* is a 27 year old NZ European who is a new single mum who had just relocated to be closer to family. Sarah had been struggling with mental health and post-partum depression. She had difficulty being able to attend a medical appointment as she had her new baby at home, and had yet to find a new GP in the region.

Sarah was able to have a video consultation in the evening after her baby was down for bed. The Practice Plus clinician could immediately see that Sarah was unenrolled, and accessed her most recent GP summary notes and medications. She was able to share her struggles, and receive advice and management from a Practice Plus clinician. With Sarah's consent, Practice Plus were able to help facilitate Sarah's enrollment in a local GP and sent through the consultation notes before Sarah's in person follow up appointment.

A Māori whānau had a video consultation with a Practice Plus GP late in the evening.

The kuia was worried about her 10 year old grandson Kahu.\* With 10kg weight loss, he was now much smaller than most kids his age. The whānau had been unable to access a GP as mum was working fulltime, and had difficulty finding time. The Practice Plus GP spoke with the kuia and arranged for Kahu to have a blood test and review, confirming a new diagnosis of type 1 diabetes.

The early intervention likely prevented this tamariki from presenting to the Hospital Emergency Department significantly unwell with diabetic ketoacidosis.

Rupesh\* is a 70 year old Indian gentleman, at home with his wife and both contracted Covid-19.

Rupesh overall was doing ok but given his heart failure he was anxious to get on anti-virals straight away. The Practice Plus clinician was able to see Rupesh over video, observe him breathing freely, speaking in clear long sentences, and not in any respiratory distress. The clinician could check Rupesh's full medical history, including recent blood tests and prescriptions and was able to prescribe an appropriate anti-viral to be sent to the local pharmacy.





“Practice Plus has been a valuable adjunct to Student Health, effectively extending our hours of operation. It was incredibly helpful to our service during 2022 when we had a shortage of clinical staff and high demand. We fully subsidise this for students registered with Student Health at Victoria University. Student feedback has been overwhelmingly positive about their experience using Practice Plus”

Student Health  
Victoria University Wellington

# Practice Plus Advisory Committee

The Practice Plus Advisory Committee works collaboratively with the Practice Plus Leadership Team

The goal is to develop an effective partnership in the implementation and operation of a high-performing virtual telehealth service, that meets the needs from a general practice perspective as a key stakeholder, and also from the perspective of their patients and whānau utilising the service. Practice Plus seeks to enhance consumer engagement and experience, through the promotion of equity and ensuring that services are organised and clinically delivered at a high quality.



## Advisory Committee Members



**CHAIRPERSON**  
Nicky Hart  
Feilding Health Care



Dr Dale Towers  
Taupō Medical Centre



Sian Blair  
Tokoroa Medical Centre



Dr Kirsty Lennon  
Raumati Road Surgery



Rachel Fitzgerald  
Silverstream Medical Centre



Michelle Curel  
Newtown Medical Centre



Ants Toumoua  
Naenae Medical Centre

“The last few years have been very challenging with low resources and high patient demand. Since 2022 Practice Plus has helped to reduce staff stress by having another option other than after hours. There is no claw back financially if our patients use Practice Plus, which is reassuring given the financial strain most practices are going through. Patients find Practice Plus easy to use and they find it very convenient accessing the service over the phone”

**Practice Manager**

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