Expert Advisory Committee: Digital Health in Optometry Terms of reference

Background

In 2018, Optometry Australia (OA) acknowledged that increasingly rapid change, associated with technological, economic, political and demographic influences, was disrupting primary eye care in Australia, including optometry. In response, OA launched the Optometry 2040 project to identify key trends shaping the future of eye health and eye care, plausible futures for optometry, and key steps to realising the preferred future for optometry in 2040.

As a result, OA identified that effectively leveraging Australia's digital health transformation is pivotal to both enabling the preferred future for the optometry profession, and meeting eyecare needs of Australians.

As a profession, optometry is already highly engaged in the use of technology. Therefore, it is a profession that is both ready to embrace digital health opportunities, and more likely to be impacted by advances in digital health technology. Supporting and protecting the profession requires OA to be aware of, and respond to, changes and opportunities associated with digital health.

To be aptly informed and well advised, OA is inviting esteemed experts within optometry and adjacent fields who have a wealth of experience and knowledge regarding digital technologies, to form an Expert Advisory Committee on Digital health in optometry (ACDHO).

In addition to engaging with the expertise of members, OA intends to collaborate with relevant organisations regarding opportunities in the broader digital health landscape, stay abreast of emerging developments that may impact eye care, and optimising the safety and efficiency of data collection in optometry practice.

Terms of reference

The role of ACDHO is to provide strategic advice to OA about the impact of digital transformation in healthcare, as it relates to optometry and eye care. The key areas of advice include but are not limited to:

- improving OA's awareness and understanding of emerging technologies and implications of their use on the landscape of eye care in Australia
- providing advice and insights on topics of interest relevant to OA's objective of guiding optometrists into a highly digitalised era of practice. This includes the ongoing development of electronic health records, technology-enabled service delivery, artificial intelligence in health care, eReferrals, ePrescribing, and technology interoperability
- providing advice and insights regarding the advantages, risks and ethics surrounding technology-enabled service delivery for optometry, optometrists and community eye health
- providing advice and insights into appropriate advocacy and communication about relevant digital health advancements to OA's key stakeholders and members.

This role will be executed through participating in meetings, tele/videoconferences, and email exchanges as appropriate. ACDHO may recommend the establishment of project-specific working groups, which could include expertise or people from outside of the committee.

Secretariat support

Optometry Australia will provide secretariat support, including regular updates about relevant ACDHO issues.

The Secretariat will provide meeting papers five (5) business days prior to each meeting, and a summary of meeting discussions and agreed outcomes within ten (10) business days following.

The Secretariat is responsible for the delivery of progress against agreed work plan priorities, measured through the provision of a progress update at each meeting and circulated via email out of session where warranted.

Committee term

The initial term will commence at the inaugural meeting, scheduled for early June 2024 and will conclude on 30 June 2025.

At the conclusion of each term, the Advisory Group will be disbanded and nominations for the new term will be invited by OA, as recommended by the Secretariat, and endorsed by the OA's CEO. Previous ACDHO members may be invited to re-nominate. The new term duration will be determined at the point of renomination.

Committee membership

ACDHO members are appointed by OA and will comprise up to 12 representatives, including the Chair. To constitute a quorum, at least 50% of members must be present.

The composition of the committee will reflect its responsibilities and include participants with demonstrated experience in a range of backgrounds related to digital health as deemed relevant to optometry.

Committee Chair appointment

Nominations for Chair will be sought from appointed committee members after the second meeting. In the case that more than one member nominates to be considered for the Chair position, the Secretariat will seek endorsement from the CEO.

The Chair, with support from the Secretariat, is responsible for ensuring that each meeting is planned and conducted effectively, according to the Terms of Reference, and that matters are dealt with in an orderly, efficient manner. The Chair may be required to represent ACDHO in other forums, as deemed appropriate by OA.

Committee operations

It is proposed that ACDHO will meet formally twice per year, although the group will be responsive to requirements and may meet more, or less, as determined collectively.

In the interim of formal meetings, it may be appropriate to communicate using email. Members are also able to request out-of-session meetings via the Secretariat if pertinent or urgent discussions are required.

Conflict of interest

ACDHO members are asked to disclose any potential conflicts of interest prior to, or at the beginning of, any meeting for which a potential conflict may occur. Conflicts of interest are considered to be contexts in which the group member has an interest that either competes with or may influence partiality in their role as a member of the Committee. The conflict will be considered by the Chair and Secretariat.

Confidentiality

ACDHO Members are to ensure that any materials shared and/or items discussed during ACDHO meetings or via email correspondence that are identified as confidential are kept as such. Where clarification of confidentiality is required, members are responsible for seeking clarity via the Secretariat prior to sharing any materials or information regarding discussions.

Reporting

ACDHO will report to the Optometry Australia CEO through regular updates delivered by the Secretariat.