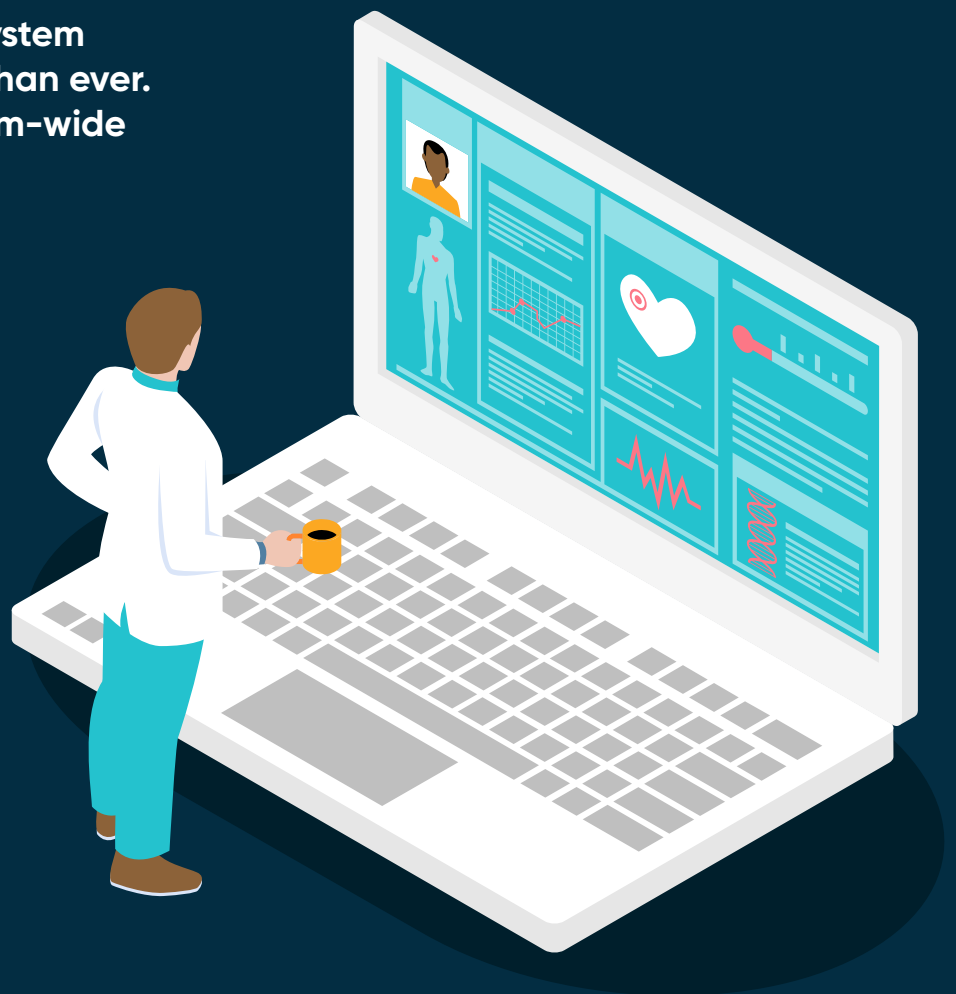servicenow.

5 myths about technology in healthcare, busted.

Australia's healthcare system is under more pressure than ever. It's why we need a system-wide approach to healing it.

The fragile state of the Australian healthcare system

Australia's healthcare system has long been the envy of the developed world. It is effective, accessible, affordable and equitable.

Yet, left to its own devices, it is becoming increasingly clear that the system will begin to fail on all these measures — possibly sooner than we imagine. Economic and demographic pressures have conspired with talent shortages to create a vicious cycle of increased workloads, burnout and staff shortages.

Hidden pressures are playing a part in its demise, too. Low-tech processes and paperwork get in the way of productivity. Fragmentation, legacy technology and siloed operations hold healthcare workers back with their confusing interfaces, multiple systems and poor user experiences.

At the same time, patients want care to become more personalised and convenient. They expect their healthcare data — from medications and care management plans, through to personal details — to follow them as they navigate the complexities of the healthcare system.

They want patient onboarding to be faster and easier, and they want better support after they have left hospital or a private practice.

The time is now for healthcare organisations to tend to the health of their own systems. The problem is, many are misdiagnosing the problems at hand. This ebook explores the myths and misdiagnoses, equipping healthcare leaders with the information they need to successfully treat their ailing systems.
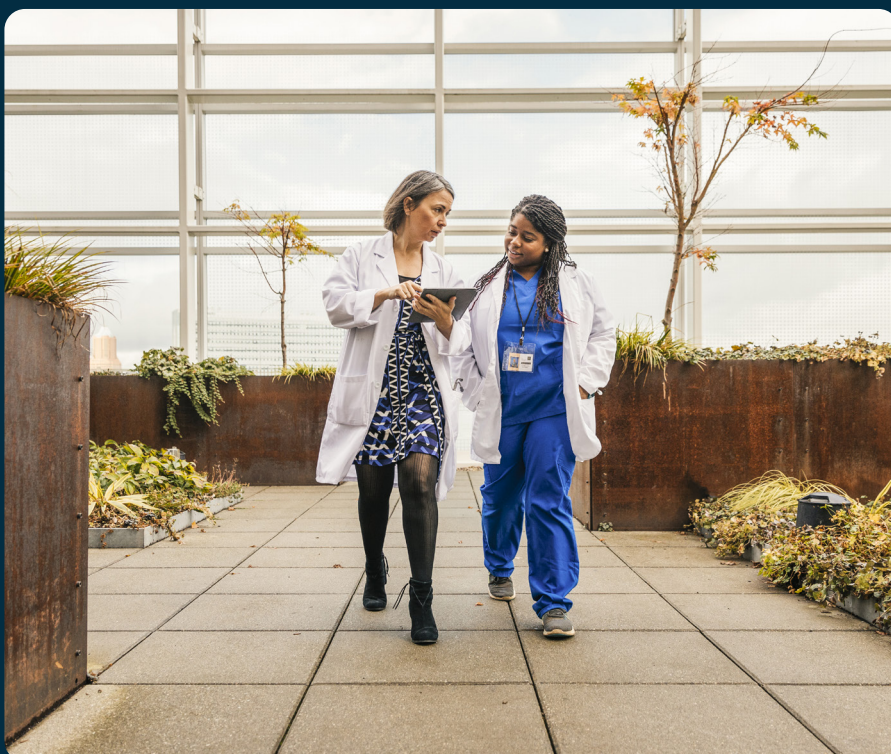
Pressure on Australia's healthcare system is mounting

79% of healthcare CEOs expect that all aspects of care delivery models will be transformed in the next three years [4]

15% increase in demand for Australian healthcare workers over the next five years [3]

80% of healthcare CEOs believe that healthcare needs disruption and change [4]

47% of Australians were estimated to have one or more of 10 selected chronic conditions in 2020–21 [2]

16.3% of the Australian population was aged 65 years and over in 2020, compared to just 12.4% in 2000 [1]

1. ABS, Twenty years of population change 2020   2. Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, Chronic conditions and multimorbidity 2023
3. PWC Australia, Planning for the healthcare workforce of the future 2019   4. KPMG, Healthcare CEO Future Pulse 2021

Health Scorecard

The Australian healthcare system has room for improvement

While most healthcare leaders know that technology and automation will play a key role in transforming the delivery of healthcare over the next decade, uncertainties abound.

Already equipped with a multitude of IT systems that solve for different elements of the healthcare journey, many are asking if any more technology is needed.

Yet the fact is that Australia's healthcare system lags far behind overseas counterparts when it comes to digital maturity. In many instances, legacy systems are disjointed and disparate, lacking the interoperability needed to deliver truly patient-centric care.

To understand our progress, one need only look at Australian healthcare providers' performance against the HIMSS Electronic Medical Record Adoption Model (EMRAM).

EMRAM measures clinical outcomes, patient engagement and clinician use of electronic medical record (EMR) technology to strengthen performance and health outcomes.

In Australia, only four facilities have made it to Stage 6 (the highest is Stage 7). 0% of facilities in Australia have achieved the top score. In comparison, the United States have nearly 50% of their facilities at Stage 7.[5]

Working towards the highest EMRAM score means overhauling systems and processes to enable:

+ Integration of data from multiple external sources

+ Delivery of alerts and reminders to support self-managed care

+ Automated tools to measure patient outcomes

+ Digital infrastructure tools enable dynamic patient engagement in managing personal health and care

The technology to enable all this is available today. It's just a matter of leveraging it.
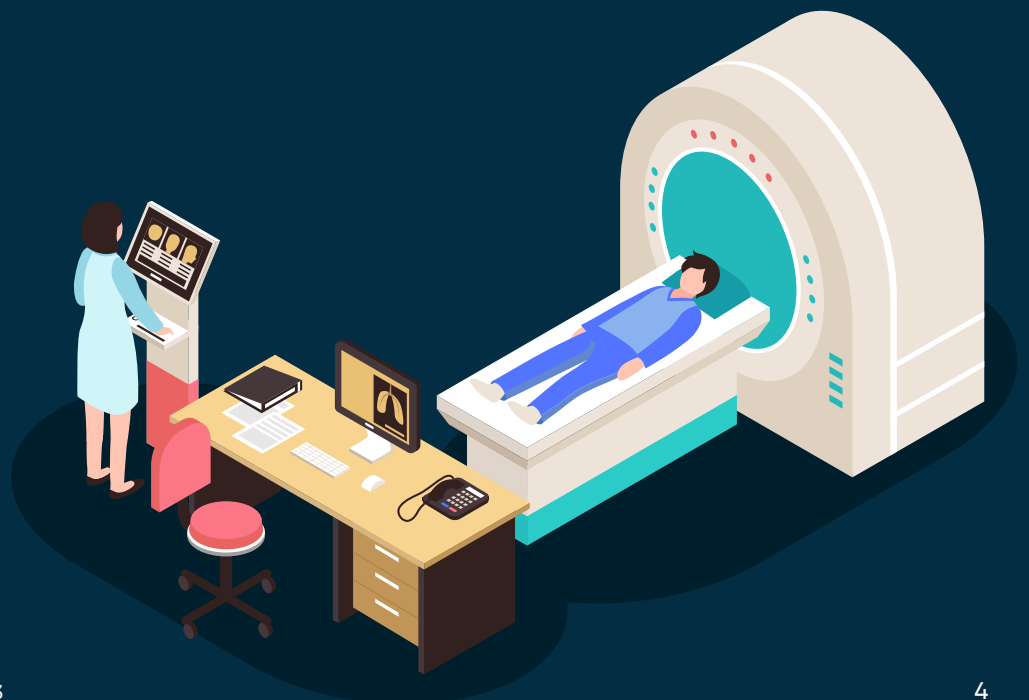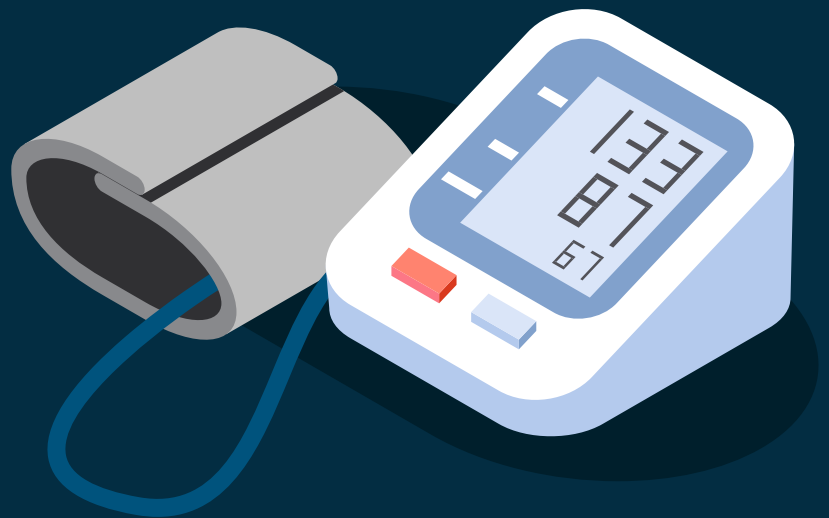
Mythbusting:
Common misconceptions about healthcare technology

Discussions with healthcare leaders reveal some common misconceptions about the role of technology in delivering value-based healthcare.

Let's take a look at these misconceptions and explore why they no longer hold true.

Myth 1: Medical record systems and care platforms can do everything

Medical record systems like EMRs, digital medical records and care platforms are increasingly being adopted by public and private healthcare practices.

The goal with these tools is to facilitate real-time access to patient information, which ultimately enables practitioners to make more informed clinical decisions at the point of care.

Given the touted benefits, many healthcare leaders mistakenly assume that these platforms can do everything. This belief can lead to disappointment and missed opportunities.

Today's medical record systems certainly do a great job with 'transaction'-type processes, yet they can fall short if multiple teams and systems need to get involved. For example, an EMR can initiate a request for a patient transfer — but unless it can seamlessly route the request and tasks to all the appropriate areas of the hospital, then its full potential is not realised.

Medical record systems and care platforms are only as good as the data being fed into them and the people using them. For example, if the platform doesn't have holistic access to all parts of a patient's health journey — such as x-rays, pathology results or medication records — then its capabilities are limited. This means the clinician ends up having to log into different systems, which in turn can hinder adoption of the new tool.

Also, not all medical record systems are created equal. Full EMRs have incredible capabilities, but they are cost-prohibitive for all but the largest of organisations. More affordable digital systems and care platforms are widely available but have their limitations.

The key is to be aware of exactly what your tool is capable of — and then identify how to augment these capabilities to drive successful adoption.

Tip: Epic is widely regarded as the gold standard for EMRs and is adopted across the Parkville Health Precinct (which has Australia's only Stage 6 EMRAM score). To drive adoption and performance, Epic uses ServiceNow as the management tool for its powerful platform.

Myth 2: Productivity is an impossible equation

An ageing population places growing demand on the nation's healthcare system.

To cope with this projected demand, healthcare organisations need to employ scores of new employees — yet the World Health Organisation estimates a global shortfall of 10 million health workers by 2030.[6]

When new employees can be found and hired, the task of onboarding and training them can be time consuming. To streamline onboarding, organisations ideally need to provide new hires with a single place to access information and get work done.

And, when new hires can't be found, healthcare organisations need to find ways to make their existing employees more productive. In fact, the health workforce must become four times more productive by 2050 to meet forecast demand.[7]

Administrative work is one area in which productivity gains can easily be realised. Doctors, nurses and clinicians spend hours filling in forms and meeting compliance requirements, logging in and out of different systems, and hunting down data. It all adds up to time away from caring for patients.

Adopting the right technology can help all employees within the healthcare setting complete administrative tasks much more efficiently — by leveraging such strategies as automation, logical workflows, and the interoperability of data between systems.

Another area where productivity gains can be made is within wards and clinics. With the right technology, critical patient data can be delivered straight to the doctors, nurses and clinicians at the patient's bedside — instead of requiring a trip down the hall to a nurses' station or office. And carers can check equipment or book an orderly from the bedside, too, in just a few clicks.

By surfacing the right information at the right time, and by eliminating the need to navigate multiple systems to find the answers they need, there's more time for patient care.

These time savings and streamlined workflows lead to greater job satisfaction and increased likelihood of employee retention — which, in today's tight job market, is incredibly valuable.

6. WHO, Health workforce 2023   7. Deloitte, Australia's Health Reimagined 2022

Gold Coast Health realises significant productivity gains

In the face of potentially disruptive worker shortages, Gold Coast Health sought to improve the patient experience, while freeing clinicians to focus more on patient services.

By adopting the ServiceNow Digital Health Platform, the organisation has connected disparate processes, elevating and streamlining the patient and clinician experience.

In terms of productivity gains, it is expected that between 127,000 and 200,000 hours could be freed up annually to focus on patient care.

"By prioritising digital liberation, we are setting a new standard for innovation to deliver the best health outcomes in Australia."

Sandip Kumar – Executive Director, Strategy, Transformation, Major Capital & Chief Digital Officer, Gold Coast Health

Myth 3: Technology is an unjustifiable cost

Budgets and bottom lines are always top of mind for healthcare leaders.

And the cost of new technologies can be a deterrent to further investment. This thinking can be compounded if they have already invested in a lot of different tools and aren't seeing return on investment.

Yet when done right, spending pays off. The Australian Government certainly thinks so, with the 2023 budget giving a huge boost to digital health with new funding of A$951.2 million over four years intended to modernise the healthcare industry's digital infrastructure.[8]

It's just a matter of spending in the right areas. The right technology solutions will amplify the benefits of your existing toolsets, while delivering new value in other areas — from time savings to operational improvements.

NSW Health proves ROI of technology investment

In 2019, NSW Health embarked on an ambitious five-year plan to transform IT management business services to increase service quality, improve the customer experience and drive efficiencies. It achieved all of this, along with savings of $16 million in the first two years alone.

8. Healthcare IT News, Budget 2023: Big boost for Australian digital health 2023

Myth 4: New models of care will just work

Across the healthcare industry, new models of care are coming to the fore — primarily to keep patients at home and out of hospitals for longer.

Governments are mandating that hospitals are acute care facilities, and all other conditions should be treated at home for as long as possible.

The problem is, many healthcare providers think that a 'lift-and-shift' approach will work when moving from on-premises to at-home models of care. Yet home care is a little more complex.

There are potentially thousands of locations to keep track of, not to mention all the equipment and devices. There's the rostering of home care workers which, in order to optimise the patient experience, involves matching the right type of carer with each patient.

To successfully deliver new models of care, healthcare organisations need to rethink systems and processes to make the roll-out of new models much easier.

Technology will play a key role here, bringing all the data relating to each patient's journey into one system to facilitate the optimal delivery of care — no matter where the carers or the patient are located.

Myth 5: More technology means more risk

Security is a valid concern in the healthcare industry, with highly sensitive patient records at risk of exposure.

And the threat is real, with healthcare organisations experiencing a 94% increase in ransomware attacks from 2020 to 2021.[9]

But it's a struggle to keep up. As the volume of digital health information grows, so too will the risk perimeter. IT and security resources are stretched thin. And siloed legacy systems limit visibility into potential risks, making it challenging to prioritise the most critical issues.

There is a misconception that adding more technology to the mix will increase exposure or compromise the entire system. In fact, the right platform can significantly strengthen security, embedding new security measures like two factor authentication or access privileges.

An overarching layer that sits across existing systems, like ServiceNow's Digital Health Platform, essentially protects the systems that sit beneath it — adding an invaluable layer of extra security to sensitive healthcare data.

Healing the system

How a system-wide approach supports all in healthcare

All of the myths and misconceptions in this eBook can be addressed with a single solution: a digital health platform.

With such a platform in place, healthcare organisations can connect siloed data, integrate different technologies and applications, digitise processes end-to-end and deliver better experiences to both employees and patients — all while increasing the value of existing technology investments.

The ServiceNow Digital Health Platform is based on the FHIR-HL7 healthcare data model. It sits across your entire IT infrastructure to enable the seamless, interoperable and secure sharing and flow of patient information and healthcare data — no matter which systems and tools you use today.

1. Improving the end-to end patient experience

Patient experiences are shaped by every interaction with their healthcare provider — from direct interactions with clinicians to the way billing processes are handled. They want fast, clear answers to questions, easy ways to schedule appointments, and flexibility in the way they connect.

To meaningfully improve patient experiences, providers must address the entire journey. ServiceNow's powerful cloud-based platform enables this, unifying the systems used by different teams across the healthcare value chain — from digital health records to billing and compliance. It's designed to improve the flow of information and provide greater visibility into what's happening with patients.

With the ServiceNow Digital Health Platform in place, everyone has better access to the data they need to respond to patients quickly. Services can also be scaled through patient self-service portals and virtual agents that assist with information gathering and routing queries appropriately.
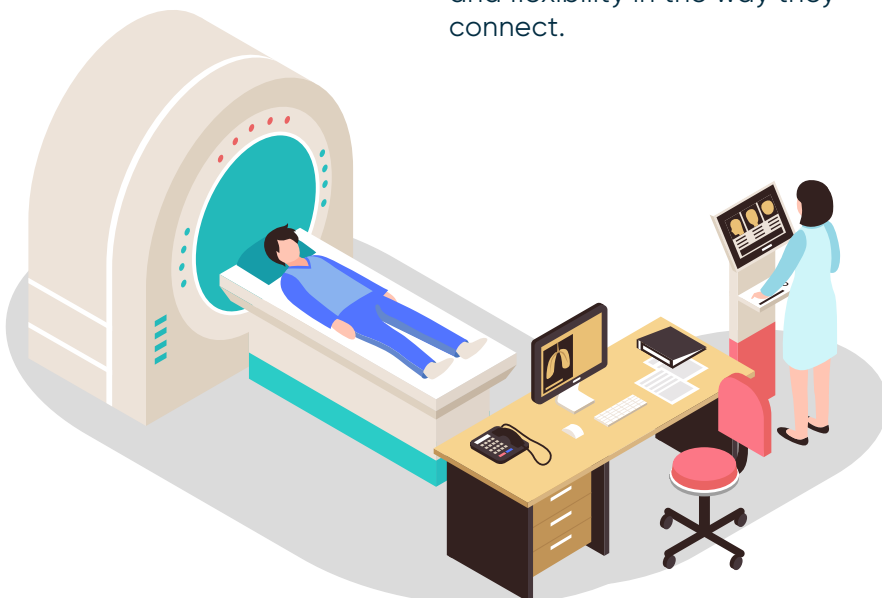
2. Empowering clinicians and staff to work more efficiently

Reducing the amount of administrative, repetitive tasks is key to solving the issues of healthcare workforce shortages. It's all about workflows — the logical sequence of steps involved in taking a specific request or task from start to finish.

Consider the details involved in scheduling a planned surgery, for example. What steps must happen before the patient walks through the door? What are the tools, systems and processes that are used to exchange information between the provider, scheduler, billing and customer services representative? How much redundant information is collected or completed by the patient and/or provider? ServiceNow simplifies the way work is orchestrated.

Similarly, consider the time it takes and the number of steps required to successfully onboard a provider. What activities are the candidates required to complete? What does a manager need to know to do on their behalf? What systems, tools, processes and teams are involved end-to-end, across recruitment, HR, payroll, credentialling, facilities and more?

By digitising and automating workflows, processes like those outlined above move faster and more efficiently. Data, forms and information can be automatically routed to the right people at the right time, helping processes run more smoothly — which ultimately improves satisfaction among both patients and staff.

3. Securely leveraging data to create value

Healthcare systems must continuously up their game to manage evolving vulnerabilities and security threats across the organisation. Patients expect their data to be protected — yet it can be a struggle to keep up.

ServiceNow helps IT, security and risk teams to share and react to information fast. Our secure, cloud-based environment prioritises data security, while connecting the systems and tools used to monitor incidents across the organisation in one place.

This single system of action provides a centralised view of what's happening, and automatically routes security tasks to the right people at the right time.

With every action digitally recorded, reporting and auditing becomes easier too, bringing down the cost of compliance.

Discover how ServiceNow can help transform your healthcare systems

The ServiceNow Digital Health Platform will help you meet current and emerging challenges in the healthcare industry. To learn more about how it can augment your existing systems, get in touch with our team today.

your.servicenow.com/health

servicenow.