



## A Cloud-based Patient-Reported Outcome Measures (PROMs) Program Paves the Way to More Personalised, Better-informed Care for Colorectal Cancer Patients



### THE SETTING

Cabrini Health and The Alfred, two leading healthcare providers in Victoria, Australia, are renowned for their care of patients with colorectal cancer. As such, the institutions were interested in better understanding the impact of colorectal cancer surgery on patients' quality of life, symptoms, and functional outcomes, as well as supporting their clinical teams to deliver more personalised, effective care.

### THE SITUATION

Colorectal surgeons and support staff were concerned to learn that post-surgery, patients had ongoing symptom burdens and functional concerns that they neglected to discuss when meeting with their surgeons. Patients expressed a reluctance to talk with surgeons about health problems they considered "minor." They also sometimes admitted to being too embarrassed to discuss certain concerns when meeting with their surgeons. Yet, these patient health outcomes were exactly what surgeons wanted to be informed of.

The problem that needed to be solved was how to get patients to share the details they didn't want to discuss face-to-face with their surgeons and ensure this information was readily available for the surgeons to review and discuss with patients.

## THE SOLUTION

Patient Reported Outcome Measures (PROMs) allow patients the opportunity to share critical, and often sensitive, information about their own health outcomes. For colorectal cancer patients, that includes general quality of life, symptom burden as well as bowel-specific function. PROMs enable subjective responses about patients' key health outcomes to be converted into numerical scores that can be measured, benchmarked, and improved.

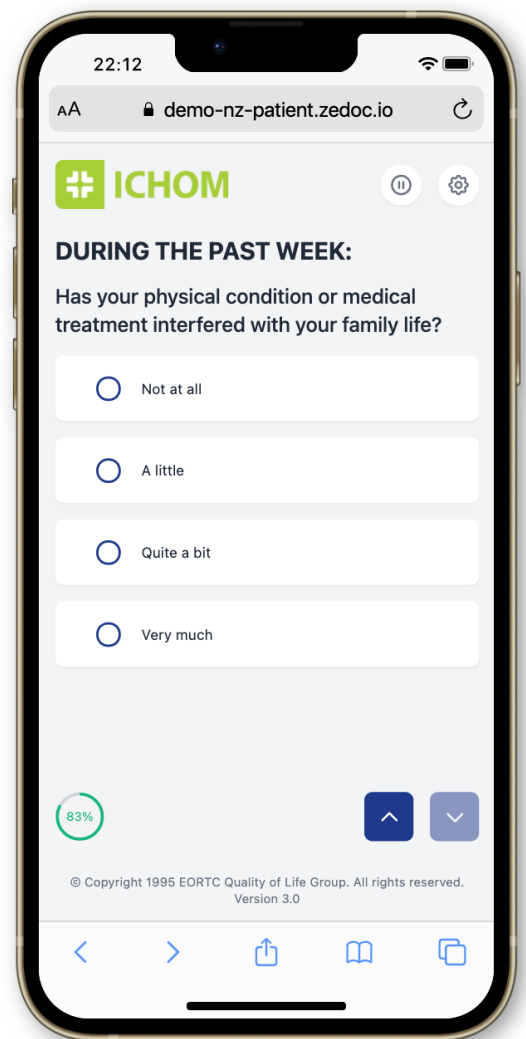
Traditionally, PROMs have either not been routinely collected, or collection has been managed using paper-based or basic survey tools, leading to considerable administrative burden and cost.

To solve the headaches of manually collecting and analysing PROMs data, the Cabrini Health and Alfred surgical teams looked to a digital platform enabling patients to report their outcomes in the privacy of their own homes on their own electronic devices.

PROMs enable subjective responses about patients' key health outcomes to be converted into numerical scores that can be measured, benchmarked, and improved.

“ A retrospective study we conducted showed that a significant number of colorectal cancer survivors still experienced bowel symptoms, even up to two years post-surgery. As a result, we launched the prospective PROMs program to address unmet needs identified in our patients.

- Dr. Christine Koulis,  
Project Coordinator



The Clinician’s ZEDOC platform provided a streamlined, cloud-based PROMs program running on Amazon Web Services (AWS) infrastructure through which assessments are distributed to patients automatically via email and SMS, while responses are collected and analysed by the platform in real-time.

Working closely with the surgical teams, a set of analytics dashboards were configured within ZEDOC, transforming the raw scores into actionable information for surgeons to effectively address their patients’ needs.

With an entirely new way to bring the patient’s voice into their clinical journey, the colorectal cancer team at Cabrini Health and The Alfred launched this cloud-based PROMs program for all patients diagnosed with colorectal neoplasia.

“*A patient representative who had gone through cancer explained she felt embarrassed to bring up certain things and didn’t want to burden her surgeon with ‘trivial’ matters. She felt she should just be grateful that her cancer was cured.*”

- Dr. Christine Koulis,  
Project Coordinator

## IMPLEMENTING THE PROMs PROGRAM AT CABRINI HEALTH AND THE ALFRED

While setting up a PROMs program within a multi-hospital system for more than a dozen surgeons, their staff, and hundreds of patients



might sound like a daunting task, the teams at Cabrini Health and The Alfred found that the simplicity of the ZEDOC platform and the assistance of The Clinician staff made it relatively easy. Instructional videos helped the process significantly.

Since the launch of the project, surgeons and their staff have remarked that the platform is easy to use and simple to navigate.

Today, the first patients have been enrolled and are entering their data on an ongoing basis. Early feedback on the program is positive and promising:

Additionally, although PROMs are not traditionally used to guide treatment, surgeons at Cabrini Health and The Alfred have expressed interest in using the information gained through PROMs to help in this area.



This Victoria-first program will give colorectal cancer patients a voice and this will allow us to improve their health-related outcomes through improved symptom monitoring and enhanced patient-clinician communication.”

- Professor Paul McMurrick

## THE RESULTS

The impact of the PROMs program at Cabrini Health and The Alfred will continue to unfold for many months to come. But, in the meantime, there is already discussion of the larger impact this program might have.

“We’ve discussed rolling out this program to the larger, Bi-national Colorectal Cancer Audit, which would include all colorectal cancer patients in Australia and New Zealand,” said Dr. Koulis. “By implementing the PROMs program, we aim to improve the communication between patients and their treating clinician, which will allow for more timely management of specific health concerns. As a result, we hope to see improved quality of life, a reduction in readmissions and improved survival outcomes in our patients.”

## KEY LEARNINGS

Patients don’t always share all the information that they should with their healthcare providers. That communication breakdown can have serious consequences for patients and the healthcare institutions working to serve them. Implementing a digital PROMs program can provide a solution to help drive more informed, personalised and value-driven care.

To learn more, visit [theclinician.com](http://theclinician.com) and [letsbeatbowelcancer.com.au](http://letsbeatbowelcancer.com.au)

Learn how a digital PROMs program  
can transform your care delivery

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