



## MEDIA RELEASE

### **Aussie's ready to embrace artificial intelligence in healthcare.**

**Tuesday, 10 January 2017:** A new survey by Australia's leading not-for-profit health fund, HCF, has revealed we are ready to embrace Artificial Intelligence (AI) in health care, opening the way for further innovation and improved care for patients.

The survey, released today, indicated over 80 per cent of Australians are comfortable with AI being used to diagnose common medical problems and interpret test results. They are even willing to allow AI to be used in prescribing treatment for patients (72%).

The first HCF Health Barometer Survey investigated the future of medicine and health care, and reveals that while the advancement of technology is largely seen as a positive, there is still a healthy dose of scepticism and uncertainty about how and why technology might be used in the health system.

When considering the use and impact of AI in health care, the survey reveals people see clear benefits in what was once only seen as futuristic.

Just under two-thirds (58%) of respondents think AI is a major step in the right direction for earlier disease detection and reduced incidence of death. Improved efficiency (50%), accuracy (57%) and keeping long-term hospital patients comfortable at home (53%) are also revealed as benefit of embracing AI technology.

Importantly, more than half (53%) of Australians believe the use of AI will reduce the pressures on the current health care system and almost half (46%) think the technology can assist in relieving medical staff to focus on more important tasks at hand.

However, people also acknowledge some of the limitations of AI technology and identified privacy concerns over patient records and medical confidentiality (58%) and the lack of human intuition (57%) as issues.

Shaun Larkin, HCF Managing Director, said "It's clear that Australians can see the benefit of technological advancements in health, particularly where it can be used to prevent disease and improve patient care. However, it seems we are also torn between the perceived positives and the potential limitations of removing the human element. This healthy dose of scepticism is important for the sector to recognise and respond to – we need to be clear about the benefits but also to be very open about any potential risks."

"It's easy to get excited about technology that can help save lives and potentially revolutionise patient care. At the same time, we need to be aware of the implications of change – from the true cost of technological advancements to other ethical and personal considerations. Our health care system is innovating and it is important we do this at the right speed to address changing health needs but also to ensure consumers are comfortable," Mr Larkin said.

"The future is already here in many ways and there are a number of recent inventions and technological applications that will undoubtedly change the face of the health care industry in the future. We've seen

this and supported it, for example through the HCF Catalyst program, an accelerator program that helps health tech businesses take their ideas and develop them into a business reality. We will continue to support innovation that benefits Australians and promote education and clear communication so consumers understand changes in the industry, now and in the future.”

**-Ends-**

**Notes to editors:** The HCF Health Barometer ran between 13 to 18 October 2016, and includes data from 1,207 respondents to a survey.

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**ABOUT HCF**

HCF, leading not-for-profit health fund protecting Australians since 1932, covers over 1.5 million members with health and life insurance, community care, travel and pet insurance.

On average over the last five years, HCF has paid out more cents in every dollar in premiums to members as benefits than the industry average.

With over 35,000 specialists participating in its Medical Gap Cover Scheme and approximately 10,000 providers participating in its 100% back More for You ancillary programs, HCF gives members access to a wide range of quality health care services with no gap.

To empower members to put their health first, HCF also offers a range of health and lifestyle services including its My Health Guardian health management program, mobile Victor Chang Health Checks and My Global Specialist second opinion service.

HCF's national network of retail outlets and 100% Australian-based call centres have won multiple national and international awards.

HCF members also have unique access to at HCF Dental Centres.

Having contributed \$50 million to support the health services research funded by the HCF Research Foundation, HCF is devoted to investing in the future of Australia's health.

To learn more about HCF go to [hcf.com.au/about-us](http://hcf.com.au/about-us)