

Media release

Lack of awareness about chronic disease risks adding to healthcare crisis

Allianz Partners' States of Mind Health Report reveals three mindset shifts required to achieve better outcomes within healthcare systems.

Paris, 25 January 2022 – Only a third (33%) of over 65s are concerned about the risk of suffering from chronic diseases like heart disease, stroke, and diabetes¹. That's despite the fact that chronic disease is by far the leading cause of death worldwide, and the biggest burden health systems face. With health systems around the world under acute strain this winter, the Allianz Partners' States of Mind Health Report warns that long-term, systemic challenges risk being deprioritized.

These are some of the key trends outlined in the report published by Allianz Partners, a world leader in insurance and assistance services. Drawing on insights from leading industry experts, as well as on Allianz Partners' own public opinion data, the report highlights three key mindset shifts that can help health systems tackle the wide-ranging and systemic challenges they face today:

- Refocusing on prevention rather than cure.
- Empowering more people on health.
- Unlocking the true potential of digital health.

Increasing public awareness and engagement with chronic or non-communicable diseases (NCDs) is vitally important if countries are to reduce the strain on health systems today and in the future. That's especially true in the context of an ageing global population: as people live longer with chronic disease, the burden from NCDs will increase significantly.

The report highlights an urgent need to focus on preventative measures – like changes in diet, reducing smoking and alcohol consumption – which reduce the risk of NCDs. It argues that greater patient empowerment is required to improve patient experience and encourage behavioural change. But there are worrying signs in Allianz Partners' survey data: only 46% of those surveyed across all demographics said they want to take a more active role in their own healthcare post-pandemic.

In order to increase patient proactivity, health providers must better understand the barriers facing individuals and do a better job of "meeting patients where they are" – for example, influencing via local communities and through family groups.

Health systems must also continue to engage in the evolution of digital health as a way of enabling better preventative health and greater patient engagement. While convenience often

¹ Allianz Partners' Customer Lab proprietary quantitative database from 2022; data collected surveying + 25,000 consumers across ten major markets.

dominates around discussion digital health services, the report highlights the need to focus on the unique potential of health tech in areas like real-time data collection – and the major barriers to adoption, such as disparity of access.

Recent years have seen a sharp increase in the use and focus on digital health services among sections of the population. Allianz Partners' data reveals a 26-point rise in teleconsultation usage over the last two years among young families. But there remains a stark digital divide across generations. Only 39% of those aged over 65 are using or would consider using medical telemonitoring in some form according to Allianz data. That's in contrast to 66% of young families.

Paula Covey, Chief Marketing Officer for Health at Allianz Partners, commented: *"I'm not convinced that the pandemic was a catalyst for most people to change their health-related behaviours. We've seen some trends to suggest that some people modified their lifestyles to become healthier, but my sense is that this was mainly driven by people who were already starting to be proactive about their health before the pandemic. Many others found it more difficult to be healthy in the last few years."*

"With health systems around the world dealing with acute challenges this winter, we can't afford to deprioritise chronic conditions, or the behavioural changes that reduce many of the risks. We need to deepen our understanding of the issues and potential solutions to the slow-motion health crisis that's unfolding – empowering patients to take greater responsibility for their health and by making better use of the new technology now available."

Dr Umbereen Nehal, paediatrician, former Chief Medical Officer and Medicaid medical director, current MIT Sloan Fellows MBA candidate, added: *"There's a real risk that healthcare professionals and health systems assume someone lacks personal responsibility if their engagement in health is perceived as unscientific – for example, if they're following health practices from a non-European culture. Our task is to engage and connect with people in a way that is respectful and builds trust."*

"Dismissing people as disinterested or irresponsible is deeply counter-productive. Being disengaged with healthcare professionals does not equate to being disengaged with healthcare. But health systems must better leverage networks within local communities and families, to bring people inside the healthcare circle. Better engagement is essential to delivering better healthcare outcomes."

The Allianz Partners States of Mind Health report is available to read in full online [here](#)

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About Allianz Partners

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available through several commercial brands including Allianz Assistance, Allianz Travel and Allianz Care. Present in over 75 countries, our 19,800 employees speak 70 languages, handle over 64 million cases each year, and are motivated to go the extra mile to offer peace of mind to our customers around the world.

For more information, please visit: www.allianz-partners.com

About Allianz Partners' Customer Lab data

Allianz Partners' Customer Lab is a proprietary quantitative database of consumer insights. The 2022 data was collected in Spring 2022 and involved surveying more than 25,000 consumers across ten major markets: Australia, Belgium, Brazil, Canada, China, France, Germany, Italy, UK, and USA. Data is analysed at a country and age group level, as well as at the total sample level.

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