

2023 BRILLIANT WOMEN

in Digital Health Awards

RECOGNISING WOMEN IN
HEALTH & AGED CARE



Acknowledgement of Country

Telstra Health acknowledges the Traditional Custodians of Country throughout Australia and recognise their continuing connection to land, waters and culture. We pay our respects to their Elders past and present and extend that respect to all Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples today.

In this report recognising the 2023 Brilliant Women in Digital Health, we have acknowledged the location of all award recipients, including the Traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Place and Country names. Diversity in digital health is nowhere more important than in closing the gap in Indigenous health outcomes.

We acknowledge the many different and distinct groups, clans and peoples local to each Country and Nation, each with their own culture, customs, languages and laws. We also acknowledge there are variations in the way that some language or group names are spelt. Beyond Telstra Health's commitment to long-term reconciliation and our respect of the Traditional Custodians and their continuing connection to land, the aim of the inclusion of Traditional Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Place and Country names is to raise awareness of the First Nations peoples' millennia of living on the Australian continent, and to celebrate the richness and diversity of Indigenous cultures.

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Introduction

Telstra Health is proud to present the 2023 Brilliant Women in Digital Health Awards!

In this third year of the awards, we continue to recognise and celebrate the achievements of women in digital health and aged care, while raising awareness about the opportunities in the sector and inspiring others to follow their lead.

In both 2021 and 2022, the awards recognised 25 individuals for their broad contributions to digital health across the areas of mentoring and leadership, technical expertise, digital innovation and transformation, positively influencing the industry and improving health outcomes.

In 2023, the awards have taken on a new format, with six categories created and the initial intention to recognise one person for each. However, through the judging process, equally worthy recipients were found across multiple categories and, as such, we are proud to recognise and celebrate nine award recipients in the 2023 Brilliant Women in Digital Health Awards. Congratulations to all the winners, who were formally recognised at award events on 19 October 2023 across the following six award categories:

-  Advancing medical research through technology
-  Contribution to developing a new digital health product or technology
-  Achieving health outcomes using technology
-  Contribution to the growth, maturation and commercialisation of the digital health sector through innovation, leadership, support and advocacy
-  Introducing a new digital process to improve clinician and patient experiences in health and aged care
-  And a Judges' Choice Award to recognise outstanding contributions and achievements in the sector more broadly.

Once again, the judges have been incredibly impressed by the high-quality achievements of all nominees at various career stages across the diverse fields of digital health – from medical research and academia, to not-for-profit, public health, aged care and private sectors.

The judging criteria considered their skills and contributions, notable achievements within a particular category, the degree to which they have gone above and beyond, and the level of innovation demonstrated that has made an impact.

We hope you enjoy reading this report, with detailed profiles about each recipient's achievements and contributions, as well as greater insights about each person in terms of their influences, career, aspirations and legacy.

About the awards and the #BCWinDH network

The awards are an initiative of the Brilliant Connected Women in Digital Health Network, which Telstra Health launched in October 2020. The network now has more than 1,600 members united by an interest in digital health. It provides a community to share ideas, create connections, inspire opportunities and celebrate successes.

We look forward to continuing the annual awards in support of the network's purpose, as well as bringing you more initiatives and events in the year to come. We welcome you to join the network – continue reading for more information.

Our 2023 BRILLIANT WOMEN in Digital Health Awards



Belinda Adams



Dr Julie Ayre



Professor Frances Kay-Lambkin



Cathie La Riviere



Dr Yael Perry



Dr Silvia Pfeiffer



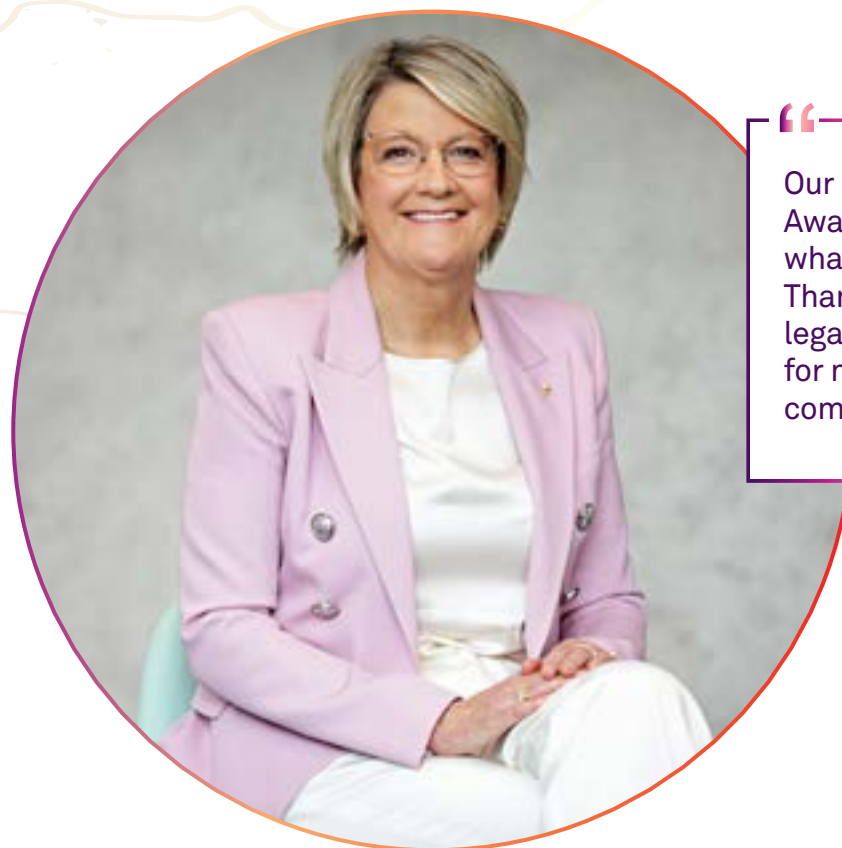
Professor Arcot Sowmya



Dr Kate Taylor



Associate Professor Sonika Tyagi



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Our 2023 Brilliant Women in Digital Health Award recipients are prime examples of what is possible within digital health. Thank you to each winner for creating a legacy with the potential to create change for many – within the sector, across communities, and for generations to come.

A message from our Managing Director, Elizabeth Koff AM

Congratulations to the 2023 Brilliant Women in Digital Health Award recipients!

I am delighted to present this year's impressive award recipients, each of whom has made meaningful contributions to digital health and aged care. This year for the first time, we have introduced award categories, with nine winners across the six categories. The overall feedback from the judges was consistent in that each winner is set apart by their brilliant thinking used to solve complex problems for improved patient outcomes, both within and outside their day jobs.

The achievements of the winners vary across health and aged care, medical research, technology and innovation, with examples of

their work including: significant contributions to mental health research, advancements in machine learning for challenges in health informatics, digitised referral pathways, improved experiences for aged care residents and staff, greater access to health care for rural and remote communities using telehealth, the promotion of health literacy – and more.

Since launching the awards in 2021, we've learnt more about the significance of female representation, particularly in leadership positions, and the impact this can have on attracting and retaining talent. We've witnessed the importance of others supporting women and women backing themselves. This year, we're exploring the theme of legacy – the legacy being created by the award recipients, as well as the legacy being built by society.

Legacy can take many forms, and while many of us might not be remembered in history books, it does not lessen our ability to create meaning and influence in the world around us. When I think of legacy, it's about the connection between each of us – those who have come before us and the responsibility we have to those who come after us.

As a country, we're making gradual shifts in the public conversation about gender equality.

The national gender pay gap is 13%, according to ABS data as of May 2023. When we break that down to look at industries, the gap for health care and social assistance sits at 21%, while professional, scientific and technical services is 22.7%. Despite women making up 75% of the Australian healthcare workforce, leadership positions are disproportionately held by men. When we overlap that with the representation of women in Science, Technology, Engineering and Mathematics (STEM), it is significantly lower – both in terms of overall workforce and leadership positions.

I believe digital health is well-placed to be a leading industry in creating equitable workplaces – both by working smarter, not harder, as well as enhancing career opportunities amongst the predominantly female health and aged care workforce. Research shows that more women in health and aged care leadership positions helps to improve organisational performance as well as improve health outcomes for all.

Our 2023 Brilliant Women in Digital Health Award recipients are prime examples of what is possible within digital health. Thank you to each winner for creating a legacy with the potential to create change for many – within the sector, across communities, and for generations to come. I encourage you to read their profiles and discover more about their achievements, influences, career and life experiences, as well as aspirations for their ongoing legacy, personally and professionally. I hope their stories inspire you and their representation raises awareness about the opportunities available in digital health.

I would like to express my sincere gratitude to our judges – Professor Ngiare Brown, Professor Jane Halton AO PSM, Dr Steve Hambleton AM and Dr Louise Schaper – for their diligent efforts in selecting our 2023 award recipients.

Finally, thank you to all who participated in this year's awards by submitting a nomination. Without you, this initiative would not be possible. As always, it's heartening to receive such high-quality nominations that are a testament to the strength of the people working across digital health and aged care. We hope you continue to nominate as your achievements and contributions multiply.

I look forward to celebrating the 2023 Brilliant Women in Digital Health, and fostering the legacy of these awards in the years to come.

Elizabeth Koff AM
Managing Director, Telstra Health

**Message from our
Managing Director**

Our 2023 judges

Thank you to our four brilliant judges, with notable careers across health and aged care, for bringing their expertise and experience to select our 2023 award recipients.



Professor Ngiaire Brown

Chair, National Mental Health Commission and Founding Director, Ngaoara

Professor Brown is a proud Yuin nation woman from the NSW south coast. She is passionate about Aboriginal and Indigenous health, child safety and adolescent development, and building the evidence base that demonstrates connection across culture, resilience and wellbeing. Professor Brown is a Fellow of the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners and has held a variety of positions in education, mentoring, clinical practice, policy, research and advocacy, with extensive contributions to Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health over the past three decades. She is currently Chair of the National Mental Health Commission; the Founding Director of Ngaoara, a not-for-profit committed to child and adolescent wellbeing; and Chancellor of James Cook University.



In my third year of judging these awards, I continue to be struck by the breadth and depth of skills across digital health. Whether you're a pure 'techie' working in health without a clinical background, or a long-term clinician trying to improve health outcomes through innovative approaches – it takes collaboration, hard work, patience and an ability to always be learning. Congratulations to all winners for the impressive commitment to their field, and for helping people through their work along the way.



Professor Jane Halton AO PSM

Chair, Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations and Co-Chair, COVAX initiative

Professor Halton is a health expert, with a 33-year career in the public service, including as former Secretary of the Australian Department of Health and the Department of Finance. She is the Chair of the Coalition for Epidemic Preparedness Innovations and Co-Chair of the COVAX initiative. Professor Halton was a member of Australian COVID-19 Coordination Commission advisory committee and is on the boards of ANZ, Crown, Australian Strategic Policy Institute and the Institute of Health Metrics and Evaluation. She has held numerous international positions including Chair of the WHO Board, President of the World Health Assembly and Chair of the OECD Health Committee.



While the achievements of the 2023 winners are impressive and award-worthy, we are celebrating so much more than that. The Brilliant Women in Digital Health Awards initiative represents opportunity and change – for gender equity and for health outcomes. There is a reason why those working within digital health are some of the most committed people you will meet. The work is part of a much bigger picture and easily becomes more than a day job – rather a collective legacy that builds over time and will benefit generations to come. Initiatives like this are the least we can do to recognise and give back to those who give so much of themselves to the sector.



Dr Steve Hambleton AM

Board Director, Digital Health CRC

Dr Hambleton is a General Practitioner in Brisbane and a former Queensland State President and Federal President of the Australian Medical Association. He is Chief Clinical Advisor to the Australian Digital Health Agency, supporting the Senior Executive Committee and Chief Executive Officer. Dr Hambleton also supports Digital Health Advisers, both for Clinical and Consumers, who provide input into the work of the Agency. He chairs the Clinical Governance Committee that operates to ensure the Agency delivers programs and projects that are high quality and clinically safe.



Our 2023 Brilliant Women in Digital Health showcase qualities that we should all aspire to, whether you work in digital health or not. Their leadership, creative thinking and contributions beyond their day job are seriously impressive. I'm proud to have been part of the judging panel and look forward to celebrating their achievements as well as witnessing the progression of their careers and legacy. Congratulations!



Dr Louise Schaper

Board Director, Evidentli & Asthma Australia

Dr Schaper is an internationally renowned digital health leader and passionate advocate for the transformation of healthcare, enabled by technology. She has 20 years' experience at the intersection of innovation and health, including 13+ years as the CEO of the Australasian Institute of Digital Health. Dr Schaper has a background as an occupational therapist, a PhD in technology acceptance among health professionals, is a graduate of Stanford's Executive Leadership Program, a Certified Health Informatician, a Salzburg Global Seminar Fellow and a Fellow of both the International Academy of Health Sciences Informatics and the Australasian Institute of Digital Health.



It's been an honour to review the diverse nominations received for the 2023 Brilliant Women in Digital Health Awards. I continue to be amazed at the achievements by people from across all career stages and fields of digital health. While it was hard to narrow the selection of nominees to just nine people across six categories, our winners are all deserving due to the measurable and significant outcomes of their work. Thank you to all participants in this award initiative for reinforcing why digital health is such an exciting and impactful sector to work in.



INTRODUCING A NEW DIGITAL PROCESS TO IMPROVE CLINICIAN AND PATIENT EXPERIENCES IN HEALTH AND AGED CARE

Belinda Adams *(She/her)*

CEO and Founder,
SoupedUp Solutions Pty Ltd

MELBOURNE, VIC – NAARM, KULIN NATIONS

With 20 years' experience in aged care and hospitality, Belinda Adams founded SoupedUp Solutions to address the lack of hospitality resources available across aged care providers and raise industry standards. SoupedUp, Australia's leading aged care catering software provider, digitises labour intensive administrative processes to ensure residents receive a quality meal service based upon their individual nutritional requirements and preferences. The technology can integrate with clinical software, benefiting aged care providers and staff by simplifying the complexities of catering and allowing them to focus on what they do best. Driven by a passion for food, commitment to raise the bar and belief that every meal is an opportunity to enrich a life and nourish the soul, Belinda designed the digital solution and delivered a new innovative process to create positive change and improve experiences for both aged care residents and staff.

What have been some of your influences growing up and early in your career?

I'm born and bred in Melbourne, and call it home, but have been fortunate enough to travel the world and learn more about people and community. I believe everything happens for a reason and all experiences – good and bad - have motivated me to reach where I am today, including those who have doubted my abilities along the way.

How do you or others describe your work in simple terms?

We make the complex simple! Aged care catering is one of the most audited areas of care, as well as one of the most challenging and lowest paid. We cater for six different food textures, five different fluid textures, over one hundred likes, dislikes and allergens, and ten different cultures at every meal service, and our residents eat six times a day, 365 days a year! We remove the administrative burden so the staff can focus on their job, and more importantly, the residents.

What are you doing when you feel at your best in your work?

I feel I am at my best when I'm solving a problem or helping someone. I am always looking for better and easier ways to do things. I have always enjoyed learning, whether that be from formal or informal education, or hands-on, practical experience. I like to know the 'how' and understand the 'why' in everything I do.

What is your hope for the potential of digital health?

The industry buzz word a few years ago was 'interoperable' but I think this has much more relevance today with the technology available. Digital health is in its infancy and holds so much power for change for both the recipient of care and the user of solutions. Innovation and technology are indispensable tools in enhancing the quality of care, particularly in the realms of food and nutrition.

What do you hope for your legacy to be - personally or professionally?

I hope my legacy is a positive one! I always tell my son that you never know what is happening behind the scenes and to treat people how you expect to be treated. This can apply to every aspect of life.



Digital health is in its infancy and holds so much power for change for both the recipient of care and the user of solutions. Innovation and technology are indispensable tools in enhancing the quality of care, particularly in the realms of food and nutrition.

Meet the 2023
award recipients



ADVANCING MEDICAL RESEARCH THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

Dr Julie Ayre (She/her)

Postdoctoral Research Fellow, Sydney Health Literacy Lab, School of Public Health, University of Sydney

SYDNEY, NSW – WARRANG, EORA NATION

Dr Julie Ayre has been recognised as an emerging leader in digital health literacy. Her work emphasises the importance of digital health information that everyone can access, understand and use. Dr Ayre's work has ranged from supporting culturally and linguistically diverse groups, particularly during the pandemic, through to shaping policy in her role as a scientific adviser to the National Health Literacy Strategy. Most notably, Dr Ayre led the development of the Sydney Health Literacy Lab's 'Health Literacy Editor' which provides real-time objective feedback on difficult-to-understand health information. Since its well-received launch, the tool has been used by many organisations to revise their content for real-world scenarios, including the rapid development of NSW Health's '2021 simple English vaccine glossary'.

What has been pivotal in your career progression and leading you to this point?

I've always been interested in how we make sense of the world around us, how we learn, and how we communicate with each other. In my current work, I'm able to bring together my training in psychology and linguistics and apply it to the field of health communication. My experience of working with various research partners, including academics, healthcare workers and community members, has helped my research become more impactful in a real-world setting to achieve change and improvements to our healthcare system. I also had some wonderful research experiences early on. For example, at the end of my undergraduate degree I undertook a summer research placement at the University of Sydney. I was able to see research in action and work with academics from varied backgrounds, such as nutrition, psychology and medicine. This feeling of working with a dynamic, energetic and thoughtful team has always stayed with me.

What are you doing when you feel at your best in your work?

I feel at my best when I'm connected to the people that use my work, particularly when they tell me about some of the unexpected benefits. For example, I've heard from many health professionals that the Health Literacy Editor has helped them explain things more clearly to patients in face-to-face appointments, even though the Editor is focused on improving written information.

What do you hope for your legacy to be – personally or professionally?

I hope my work supports healthcare systems provide information that better meets the needs of patients and communities. Good communication is a fundamental part of safe and high-quality health care.

What is your hope for the potential of digital health?

If we want a fair and effective system, we need to develop solutions in partnership with our diverse communities. While new technologies bring so many possibilities, I hope that we place the experiences of people and communities at the centre of these technologies and recognise both the opportunities and the limitations.

What's next for you?

My current goals are to work towards evaluation of the Health Literacy Editor, raise awareness about the software and work with organisations to identify how it can best be implemented in routine practice.



I hope my work supports healthcare systems provide information that better meets the needs of patients and communities. Good communication is a fundamental part of safe and high-quality health care.

Meet the 2023
award recipients



JUDGES' CHOICE AWARD TO
RECOGNISE OUTSTANDING
CONTRIBUTIONS AND ACHIEVEMENTS
IN THE SECTOR MORE BROADLY

Professor Frances Kay-Lambkin *(She/her)*

Institute Director and CEO, Hunter
Medical Research Institute

NEWCASTLE, NSW – MULUUBINBA,
AWABAKAL AND WORIMI COUNTRY

Professor Frances Kay-Lambkin is an internationally recognised leader, with a career spanning multiple roles, whose influential work has ultimately linked millions of people across several countries with treatments proven to improve mental health and reduce substance use. For two decades, she has led a digital health research program which encouraged a shift in the treatment of mental health and drug-use disorders and transformed access to world-class health care for people with comorbidity. This has included the creation of SHADE, a mobile and web-based program for improving health outcomes of people who have previously not accessed treatment; and eCLiPSE, a digital ecosystem enabling 25,000 people in NSW to access free, 24/7, effective psychological treatments. Professor Kay-Lambkin's digital health interventions have reduced costs, freed up time for clinicians and improved access to alternative care options for people hesitant to seek in-person treatment.

What has been pivotal in your career progression and leading you to this point?

My parents facilitated my love of learning – their belief in my abilities means I continue to seek out new innovative ways of doing things better. At university, I wasn't accepted into medicine and instead decided to pursue a science degree. This led me to discovering psychology and, in turn, has taught me to think about the interconnection between the world and humans - to consider the whole person and all the things in their lives that can impact them. Psychology combines my interest in biology with creative ways of communicating and engaging with people. I now find myself creating digital therapy programs that combine all of these passions and interests. I never would've found my way here if I had been accepted into medicine – it was meant to be!

How do you or others describe your work in simple terms?

My youngest daughter says that I "talk on the computer and phone and do a lot of typing." My eldest daughter says that I "fix people's brains." Both are kind of true! Basically, I try to use technology and what I know about psychology to teach people to be their own therapist.

What do you hope for your legacy to be - personally or professionally?

It is my hope to create 'things' that can make a person's path through life a little easier tomorrow than it was today. I hope for people to learn how to be their authentic selves, whether at work or play. I aim to showcase this in my day-to-day by bringing compassion, feeling and humanity into my work as a strong, decisive leader.

What is your hope for the potential of digital health?

For every person to have access to the support they need, whenever they need it, however they need it, and they use this to become the healthiest and happiest version of themselves.

What's next for you?

At the Hunter Medical Research Institute, we're embarking on an ambitious mission to help the 1 million people in our Hunter New England region become the healthiest people on the planet. This means we have to get very real about health disparities across regional, rural and remote locations. We need to genuinely engage with the community about their health needs and deliver on this by translating our knowledge into practice at scale and at pace. Digital health will be a critical facilitator here.



Psychology combines my interest in biology with creative ways of communicating and engaging with people. I now find myself creating digital therapy programs that combine all of these passions and interests. I never would've found my way here if I had been accepted into medicine – it was meant to be!

Meet the 2023
award recipients



ACHIEVING HEALTH OUTCOMES USING TECHNOLOGY

Cathie La Riviere *(She/her)*

Hospital Manager of Virtual Health,
Mackay Hospital and Health Service

MACKAY, QLD - YUWIBARA COUNTRY

Cathie La Riviere has used her expertise and passion for change to transform the Mackay Health Service into a regional leader in the provision of digital health services. She has constantly pursued, adopted and integrated new technology for improving patient health outcomes and access to care. Cathie coordinated the implementation of a Hospital in the Home Remote Patient Monitoring Program, a virtual ward service for COVID-19 and chronic disease, and established a unique public-private partnership to manage waitlist demand and patient flows. With 25 years' experience in health care, Cathie's patient-first approach has seen her advocate for countless new virtual care models to improve patient outcomes. This pioneering mentality goes beyond Cathie's role with the Mackay Health Service, as she is involved in state-wide working groups where her expertise helps to share the future of virtual healthcare provision in Queensland.



There is always so much to do in the digital health space. New technology and devising new models of care make this an ever-evolving environment. I never feel like the job is done and I love being involved in such a dynamic and exciting role that is helping to change the face of health care.

What has been pivotal in your career progression and leading you to this point?

When a new role was advertised to manage telehealth, I threw my hat in the ring, not really expecting to be successful. However, I got the job, and it changed my career trajectory completely. In addition to on-the-job learning and a few different certificates and diplomas that underpinned my career progression, I completed my MBA specialising in health services management. It was a terrific experience, and I was able to apply my learnings directly to my work.

How do you or others describe your work in simple terms?

I describe how virtual care is changing the way we can deliver care that is safe, effective and convenient directly to patients from anywhere. I explain how virtual models allow us to connect specialists and care teams with our patients in real time, at the point of need. It's life-changing to receive telehealth at home for people who are unwell, immune-compromised, or have to travel long distances to access care. Many patients struggle to visit hospitals for all sorts of reasons and telehealth provides flexibility to fit with their personal circumstances.

What are you doing when you feel at your best in your work?

I feel at my best when receiving feedback from patients about how virtual care supports them in their care journey and positively impacts health outcomes. I also love to learn from our clinicians who deliver amazing services to patients. I'm inspired by them every day to support their essential work. I see how virtual delivery models of care are helping medical teams manage complex cases and relieving some of the stress on the wards.

What do you hope for your legacy to be - personally or professionally?

I hope to contribute to establishing innovative models of virtual care as the norm across the health sector. There is always so much to do in the digital health space. New technology and devising new models of care make this an ever-evolving environment. I never feel like the job is done and I love being involved in such a dynamic and exciting role that is helping to change the face of health care.

What is your hope for the potential of digital health?

Improved interoperability is an important next step in the digital health journey. It needs to underpin the delivery of patient-centred care and enable the sharing of information across all care providers in the patient journey. I also hope all doctors realise the convenience and value of telehealth and virtual models of care for patients, while not sacrificing quality or the need for personal touch and human judgement.

Meet the 2023
award recipients



ACHIEVING HEALTH OUTCOMES USING TECHNOLOGY

Dr Yael Perry (She/her)

Head, Youth Mental Health,
Telethon Kids Institute

PERTH, WA – BOORLOO, WHADJUK
NOONGAR COUNTRY

Dr Yael Perry is one of few researchers in the world who develops and evaluates novel digital health tools to improve the mental health of LGBTQIA+ youth. Dr Perry's passion for the role of digital technology in enhancing the wellbeing of young people, can be seen across her work. Dr Perry has co-designed a digital game to prevent depression in trans young people; launched a digital resource hub, Transforming Families, to enhance parental understanding and support of trans children; and led the evaluation and implementation of a mental health literacy and stigma reduction program for students, now freely available online to teachers nationwide. Dr Perry aims to translate her research into policy and practice by working closely with young people, their families, service providers and decision-makers to ensure the digital outputs are effective, accessible, and appropriate with improved health outcomes for the community.

What has been pivotal in your career progression and leading you to this point?

Studying psychology and becoming a mental health researcher has perfectly combined my interests in science with my desire to help people. My Honours supervisor convinced me to do a PhD and said it would be a 'passport to the world' – it has been just that and I fell in love with research along the way. I've never been someone who aspired to simply climb the academic ladder towards professorship. I have taken a longer, slower route to where I am now – with detours for clinical fellowships, supervision, travel, and significant investment in growing and nurturing my children. I believe all these experiences make me a better researcher, leader and human.

How do you or others describe your work in simple terms?

My 7-year-old daughter calls me a "feelings doctor" who helps people feel better. My friends would call me a "social justice warrior who fights to improve the lives of the most vulnerable members of our community". I would say I am a researcher who aims to harness the power of digital technology to improve the mental health of marginalised youth.

What are you doing when you feel at your best in your work?

One of the best parts of my job is mentoring students and junior researchers. Building skills and capacity in others is not only personally satisfying, but also wonderful knowing that the future of research is in good hands. I try to follow the lead of some incredible mentors in my life, who have provided me with countless opportunities, by doing the same for young female, trans and non-binary researchers who benefit immensely from a helping hand to access otherwise out-of-reach opportunities. Women and members of marginalised communities must contend with multiple obstacles to even gain access to the same opportunities as their male counterparts. I hope that we, as a society, can increasingly recognise and actively address this inequity.

What is your hope for the potential of digital health?

While digital health has great potential to change people's lives, especially in terms of accessibility and affordability, I believe we still need to learn how to optimise that potential. My hope is that we can strike a balance between the unique benefits of digital health, while maintaining the irreplaceable contribution of human connection that supports optimal health. Digital health can play a valuable and game-changing role as part of a comprehensive toolkit to tackle critical health issues.



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CONTRIBUTION TO THE GROWTH, MATURATION AND COMMERCIALISATION OF THE DIGITAL HEALTH SECTOR THROUGH INNOVATION, LEADERSHIP, SUPPORT AND ADVOCACY

Dr Silvia Pfeiffer *(She/her)*

CEO & Co-founder,
Coviu Global Pty Ltd

SYDNEY, NSW – WARRANG, EORA NATION

Coviu Global is Australia's leading virtual care platform, built upon Dr Silvia Pfeiffer's 20 years' experience in building web video solutions and her commitment to empowering individuals through digital health. During the COVID-19 pandemic, the platform's usage grew by over 6000%. Coviu Global quickly became the government's telehealth provider of choice, thanks to its purpose-built design, replicating clinical workflows found in brick-and-mortar clinics while meeting stringent security and privacy standards. While virtual care may now be considered an integral part of the health and aged care system, Dr Pfeiffer continues to be an influential advocate for progress and change through digital transformation and using technology to address industry challenges. Dr Pfeiffer's passion for measurement-based virtual care is evident in her efforts to use research and evidence to improve and expand Coviu Global towards becoming an all-in-one virtual care platform part of every clinician's toolbox, so more patients can benefit.

What have been some of your influences growing up and early in your career?

As the daughter of a teacher, education has been a significant feature throughout my life. I've always tended to choose the more difficult path where I would learn more – such as studying a PhD in Computer Science. I knew I wanted to work in STEM and create innovations, initially thinking I would study medicine, but I couldn't stand the sight of blood, so that changed my plans.

What are you doing when you feel at your best in your work?

I feel my best when solving a challenging problem that helps someone or an industry become unstuck; whether as a computer scientist at CSIRO inventing automated captioning algorithms, as a software engineer writing Google Chrome video accessibility controls, or as CEO of Coviu helping clinicians adopt telehealth.

What do you hope for your legacy to be - personally or professionally?

I hope my legacy will be that everybody can receive the care they need at the click of a button. I hope Coviu continues to transform health care and challenges the boundaries of digital health technology to the advantage of patients across the world.

What is your hope for the potential of digital health?

I believe that only digital technology has the chance to solve the challenge of chronic disease to allow us all to live longer and better lives. In addition, women have so much to contribute to innovation in health care and shaping the future format of care. I think we need more funding of female-led businesses in general, but more than anywhere else, in health care.

What's next for you?

The next professional challenges for me are to grow Coviu internationally and find more investment as I know that the pandemic was just the beginning of virtual care and larger changes will be coming. Technology never stands still.



I hope my legacy will be that everybody can receive the care they need at the click of a button. I hope Coviu continues to transform health care and challenges the boundaries of digital health technology to the advantage of patients across the world.

Meet the 2023
award recipients



ADVANCING MEDICAL RESEARCH
THROUGH TECHNOLOGY

Professor Arcot Sowmya (She/her)

Head of the School of Computer
Science and Engineering, University of
NSW

SYDNEY, NSW – WARRANG, EORA NATION

Professor Arcot Sowmya is a leading expert in developing machine learning solutions and has made significant contributions to digital health in biomedical imaging and health informatics. Her work has yielded measurable societal impact by developing powerful *machine and deep learning* techniques for the detection, analysis and identification of anomalies and other diagnoses in large medical imaging and related clinical datasets. The applications include classification of diffuse lung disease patterns in HRCT lung images; 3D detection of calcified pleura in the diaphragmatic area and thickened pleura on the costal surfaces from MDCT images; improved feature extraction from multimodal prostate MRI for prostate cancer detection; Diabetic Retinopathy lesion detection in the peripheral retina in Ultra Wide Field images; classification of MCI subtypes in multimodal datasets; prostate segmentation in 4D perfusion MR sequences; and automatic fetal heart function assessment from 4D ultrasound. Professor Sowmya's health informatics work has involved differentiating between Alzheimer's disease and mild cognitive impairment subtypes, as well as conducting dementia survival analysis using a combination of classical machine learning and novel deep learning methods. Professor Sowmya's research distinguishes itself through strong collaboration with other researchers, clinicians, medical scientists and application specialists. By closely collaborating with these experts, her goal is to drive improvements in the application of technology to health care, in turn enhancing the delivery of medical services, and advancing benefits for patients, clinicians and the healthcare system.

What have been some of your influences growing up and early in your career?

My family, in particular my father, who believed in gender equality and gave me opportunities way beyond his means. Continuous caregiving to family members has been an ongoing feature of my life too, which I believe provides me with a unique perspective on health and aged care. Throughout this, South Indian classical music has sustained me. My interest and training in maths and computer science has also laid the foundations for my career, furthered by my teachers, supervisors and mentors throughout my life.

How do you or others describe your work in simple terms?

I work with many smart people to define and solve problems using computers.

What is your hope for the potential of digital health?

Robust digital health solutions require multiple skills and qualities. There is not one specific person or group that can achieve this on their own. I hope the diverse groups of people required can collectively work together to deploy these solutions, with respect for people's privacy and confidentiality central to designs.

What do you hope for your legacy to be - personally or professionally?

I hope my legacy is to make a difference to health care using intelligent computing, and to show it is possible to pursue both successful personal and professional lives, which may inspire my students and family to create purposeful lives too.

What's next for you?

I am looking forward to consolidating my contributions so far, as well as creating pathways for others, just as my father did for me.



Robust digital health solutions require multiple skills and qualities. There is not one specific person or group that can achieve this on their own. I hope the diverse groups of people required can collectively work together to deploy these solutions, with respect for people's privacy and confidentiality central to designs.

Meet the 2023
award recipients



CONTRIBUTION TO THE GROWTH, MATURATION AND COMMERCIALISATION OF THE DIGITAL HEALTH SECTOR THROUGH INNOVATION, LEADERSHIP, SUPPORT AND ADVOCACY

Dr Kate Taylor *(She/her)*

Vice-President, Strategy and Business Development, iCare World Australia

MELBOURNE, VIC – NAARM, KULIN NATIONS

Dr Kate Taylor fundamentally changed digital communication for eye care in Australia and New Zealand by founding Oculo, a clinical platform now used for 70% of eye care referrals in the region. Oculo has improved continuity of care and reduced patient loss to follow-up, as well as enhanced triaging, enabled targeted clinical performance feedback and training, and optimised clinic workflows. Expanding on the concept of Oculo, Dr Taylor was also successfully part of the creation of a digital platform called KeepSight - the Commonwealth-funded diabetic retinopathy recall register, encouraging adherence to national guidelines for patient review. Since the acquisition of Oculo, Dr Taylor continues to launch innovative digital and AI products and platforms for eye screening in her current role. Her visionary approach to work has always been the case, including Dr Taylor's time at the World Economic Forum where she founded the Global Health Initiative and spent the next 10 years in global public-private health partnerships, advocating for and innovating vaccines, health financing and equitable access to health technologies and services.



We have unprecedented opportunities to improve health, but we are faced with challenges from ageing populations and tight health budgets. I'm looking for ways to use innovative digital technology so we can deliver better quality eye care to more people.

What have been some of your influences growing up and early in your career?

Both of my parents are distinguished clinicians, researchers and public health leaders, and they have always inspired and supported me. Alongside my teachers, they fostered my curiosity and laid the groundwork for my love of lifelong learning and problem solving.

What has been pivotal in your career progression and leading you to this point?

Learning from experiences of adversity and failure has been an important contributor to my career. As an ophthalmology trainee, I developed an occupationally acquired, life-threatening allergy to latex surgical gloves. It was a definitive end to my clinical career and all my future plans and expectations. Medicine is such a calling, so it fundamentally shook my sense of identity. Of course, it also opened new opportunities. Along the way, I've been inspired when seeing success stories of entrepreneurial women. Data shows that female founders create disproportionate returns, so it's in everyone's interest to find more ways to support their work and share their stories to shape dreams for young women and girls.

How do you or others describe your work in simple terms?

We have unprecedented opportunities to improve health, but we are faced with challenges from ageing populations and tight health budgets. I'm looking for ways to use innovative digital technology so we can deliver better quality eye care to more people.

What do you hope for your legacy to be - personally or professionally?

Working on a global health scale, I hope it translates to demonstrably helping many more patients and making a difference to the world. I also hope to have a family that loves me as much as I love them and friends who remember my dinner parties. I couldn't do it without my wonderful, supportive and kind husband, daughter and son!

What's next for you?

iCare launched a highly automated AI-enabled retinal screening solution that is tremendous in non-traditional eye care settings like diabetes clinics, emergency departments and GP offices. I'm incredibly keen to see it put a dent in the fact that globally (and in Australia) more than half of the people with diabetes don't get the recommended eye checks that could prevent them losing their sight unnecessarily.



CONTRIBUTION TO DEVELOPING A
NEW DIGITAL HEALTH PRODUCT OR
TECHNOLOGY

Associate Professor Sonika Tyagi *(She/her)*

Associate Professor, RMIT University

MELBOURNE, VIC – NAARM, KULIN NATIONS

Associate Professor Sonika Tyagi is using her expertise in machine learning and genomics to transform health care by developing artificial intelligence platforms that can provide personalised care plans and predict future health risks. She is focused on automating the analysis of complex and diverse data across biomedical research and health care, identifying important markers for treatments and keeping a real-time watch on dangerous infectious agents. Associate Professor Tyagi has made breakthroughs in diagnosing and preventing premature birth; building a diverse Asia-Pacific genetic database to train AI models for unbiased predictions of disease biomarkers; and developing AI models that can predict early risk of antimicrobial resistance, one of the leading global public health threats. Associate Professor Tyagi's passion lies in finding new ways of working with digital health data and her work aims to improve health care and our understanding of diseases using the power of data and technology.



The fusion of digital health and big data analytics is becoming a game changer in addressing health crises, like pandemics and epidemics. I envision a future where we can predict health emergencies with the same precision as weather forecasting.

What have been some of your influences growing up and early in your career?

I learnt to code before I could cook! So, as you can tell, I've always had a profound interest in STEM subjects, with a particular passion for delving into the intricate world of nature and biology. My deep connection with nature and exploring the wonders of biology is my favourite pastime. I merged this fascination with computers, leading me to pursue studies in computational biology. For me, education represented the sole pathway to progress, after growing up in an environment where gender inequality and social and financial challenges were prominent issues.

What has been pivotal in your career progression and leading you to this point?

I've embarked on a non-traditional career journey that includes transitions between academia and industry, leading to enriching experiences throughout. One key event during my postgraduate years involved learning about the growing utilisation of computational technologies in the analysis of biological data and modelling 3D structures of proteins. In this new world, I discovered the incredible potential of virtually predicting the functions of crucial proteins and designing drugs through the power of computer simulations. In more recent days, I've seized the opportunity of using advanced AI algorithms to link diverse health and research data for impactful outcomes. I am also excited to work under the leadership of Professor Karin Verspoor as a role model in the field of AI and natural language processing, after admiring her work for years from afar.

What do you hope for your legacy to be - personally or professionally?

My professional aspirations revolve around making meaningful contributions to the 'wellness of citizens', which encompasses the overall health and wellbeing of communities and populations. The prospect of enhancing the quality of life for individuals through my work is profoundly satisfying to me. On a more personal level, I hope I can be a positive role model for women of colour who aspire to pursue careers in STEM and to take up leadership opportunities while also caring for a young family.

What is your hope for the potential of digital health?

The fusion of digital health and big data analytics is becoming a game changer in addressing health crises, like pandemics and epidemics. I envision a future where we can predict health emergencies with the same precision as weather forecasting. This would allow us to take proactive steps to minimise their impact and track their progression more effectively. Nevertheless, it will be crucial to address privacy and security concerns and ensure the responsible and ethical deployment of new technologies.

Meet the 2023
award recipients

Telstra Health's commitment to diversity, equity, inclusion and wellbeing

Telstra Health launched the Brilliant Connected Women in Digital Health Network to support the progression of gender equity in the digital health sector. We are committed to creating an equitable workplace and an environment that is diverse, inclusive and supportive for our people.

We recognise the value of our employees, who are so much more than the roles they fulfil. Each person brings unique perspectives and experiences that enhance the creation and delivery of our digital health solutions and services, and ultimately benefits the health outcomes for all. In doing so we create greater innovation and better customer connection, and helps us attract, engage and retain talented people.

Across our organisation, we are proud to be well-positioned in our workforce's gender composition, including women in leadership positions. However, when focusing on the technology and innovation units of our organisation, it is still predominantly men. This is reflective of the broader industry and the need to create an accessible and supportive environment for more women to enter technology roles.

We are continually addressing these issues through our various policies, programs and engagement initiatives. We are actively increasing the representation of women across Telstra Health by ensuring women are fairly represented on shortlists and interviews for technology and people leader roles, and succession plans are in place to build a pipeline of future leadership talent.

The technology and health and aged care industries are at a pivotal point to address the significant issues impacting women and to retain employees. Our Flexible Work Policy helps employees work in a way that suits them, whether the reason be for family, capacity to work, mental health or any other personal reasons. Our gender-equal Parental Leave Policy offers 16 weeks of paid parental leave for all parents, designed to give women and men equal choice in sharing the caring responsibilities whilst balancing their careers.

On a final note, we acknowledge there is a gap in these awards in the recognition of achievements by people identifying as Aboriginal and/or Torres Strait Islander and/or focused on Indigenous health outcomes. We are committed to ensuring our awards moving forward are accessible to all people. While diversity in digital health is important, it's also an important focus to close the gap in Indigenous health outcomes.

For more information about the policies, programs and initiatives that support and represent the diverse identities and passions of our people, we encourage you to visit our [Telstra Health Careers webpage](#).



Join the Brilliant Connected Women in Digital Health Network

Are you interested in digital health? We invite you to join the #BCWinDH network!

Launched in 2020, the Brilliant Connected Women in Digital Health Network has grown to more than 1,600 members united by an interest in digital health. The network provides a community to share ideas, create connections, inspire opportunities and celebrate successes.

Reflecting upon the last year within the network, events have focused on networking tips and tricks to establish and foster a professional network, as well as the impacts of burnout and developing strategies to recover, prevent it and thrive. Looking ahead, we aim to continue bringing you initiatives and expert speakers, addressing the issues and topics you're interested in – whether about the opportunities of digital in health and aged care or the experiences of women in the industry.

Join today and share your thoughts with us. As part of the network, you'll also receive a regular newsletter with advance notice about nominations for the next Brilliant Women in Digital Health Awards!

To join, visit www.telstrahealth.com/BCW

You can also join the conversation in the #BCWinDH Network group on [LinkedIn](#).

Follow Telstra Health and join the conversation

  @telstrahealth

#BCWinDH #digitalhealth

BRILLIANT
CONNECTED
WOMEN
in digital health

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For any enquiries or more information about the Brilliant Connected Women in Digital Health Network or the 2023 Brilliant Women in Digital Health Awards, email bcwdigitalhealth@health.telstra.com.

Join our network

2023 BRILLIANT WOMEN

in Digital Health Awards

RECOGNISING WOMEN IN
HEALTH & AGED CARE

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