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| **Abstract submitted for the 5th NSW Rural Health and Research Congress**  **Twin Towns, Tweed Heads 9 - 11 November 2016**  **Congress Stream:** 5. Technology in healthcare: innovation in action  **Alternate Stream:** 3 Mental Health/ Drug and Alcohol: addressing the complexity  **Abstract Title:** Rural young people’s healthcare journeys in the digital age  **Author/s:** **Fiona Robards1**, Melissa Kang1, Tim Usherwood1,2, Catherine Hawke3, Marlene Kong4, Oliver Burmeister5, Stephen Jan2, Lena Sanci6, Kate Steinbeck7   1. Department of General Practice, The University of Sydney, Westmead, Australia. 2. The George Institute for Global Health, The University of Sydney, Australia. 3. School of Rural Health, University of Sydney, Australia. 4. The Kirby Institute, University of New South Wales, Randwick, Australia. 5. Faculty of Business, Justice and Behavioural Sciences, Charles Sturt University, Bathurst 6. Department of General Practice, University of Melbourne, Carlton, Australia. 7. Discipline of Paediatrics and Adolescent Health, University of Sydney, Australia.     **Background**  A quarter of NSW young people live in rural areas. Many face barriers accessing healthcare, particularly in rural areas with a lack of bulk billing and youth-friendly GPs, leading to poorer health outcomes. Yet they have higher rates of admission for preventable conditions. The healthcare system is often complex, particularly for young people. Technology can help to overcome such challenges.  The Access 3 study will describe the contemporary experiences of marginalised (including rural) young people accessing and navigating the health system in NSW, including how technology supports access. Initial NSW Kids and Families funding targeted informing the next NSW Youth Health Policy, with subsequent funding helping to encourage Indigenous participation in rural and regional locations  **Approach**  The study includes a cross-sectional survey of young people aged 12 to 24 in NSW, complemented by an in-depth, qualitative, longitudinal study with marginalised young people and their journeys through the health system. Interviews are transcribed and analysed thematically. A rural reference group and youth consultant groups guided research design and promotion.  **Results**  Our early findings show that barriers for rural young people accessing health services include cost and embarrassment. However young people welcome services using technology, particularly to gain health and service information and learn how to appropriately navigate the health system.    **Take Home Message**     1. Using technology in health care is an innovative way to engage and inform rural young people. 2. Addressing access barriers and adapting services models can support young people to navigate the healthcare system. |

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