

Effectiveness of clinical supervision of allied health professionals: a survey

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Background: Australian safety and quality health service standards require that allied health professionals receive clinical supervision (CS). We aimed to evaluate the effectiveness of CS in a cohort of allied health professionals and compare the effectiveness of CS between the health professions.

Methods: CS was measured using the allied health-specific modified Manchester Clinical Supervision Scale (MCSS-26). Subscales of the MCSS-26 were summed for three domain scores (normative, restorative and formative) and a total score was calculated and compared with the threshold score of 73 for effective supervision.

Results: One hundred and ninety-six allied health professionals from seven professions (physiotherapy, occupational therapy, speech pathology, dietetics, podiatry, social work and psychology), working in hospital-based services for a large public health organisation providing services for more than 700,000 people in Melbourne, Australia completed the survey. Allied health profession and supervisor experience had a significant effect on total MCSS-26 score ($P= 0.004$, $P= 0.001$ respectively). Allied health professions scored significantly lower in the normative domain than the restorative domain (mean diff 6.0%; 95%CI 3.3 to 8.7; $P < .001$) and the formative domain (mean diff 7.9%; 95%CI 5.7 to 10.1; $P < .000$). Of the two subscales that form the normative domain allied health professions scored significantly lower in the ‘finding time’ sub-scale than the ‘importance/value of CS’ subscale (mean diff 30.6%; 95%CI 27.9 to 33.2; $P < .001$).

Discussion: A significant difference exists between allied health professions in the effectiveness of CS with social workers, psychologists and occupational therapists reporting effective supervision, while the effectiveness of CS for physiotherapists, dieticians, podiatrists and speech pathologists was uncertain. Differences between professions may be related to requirements and training in those professions. All professions reported that CS was least effective in the normative domain, because it was difficult to find time to participate in CS.