

Expanding extended scope of practice for dietitians: management of gastrostomy tubes and cares

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Background

Gastrostomy tubes (commonly known as PEG tubes) provide nutrition to patients who are unable to consume adequate nutrition orally. Traditionally gastroenterologists and/or nurses are responsible for the management of these tubes, with the dietitian prescribing the nutritional formula and monitoring nutritional status. An alternative care model was implemented at RBWH in 2008, where dietitians were credentialed to independently manage gastrostomy tubes and care, and this remains the only one of its kind in Queensland. This project aimed to develop and implement a training model to expand the extended scope of practice role for gastrostomy management by facilitating the credentialing of dietitians outside specialist centres.

Methods

The RBWH credentialing program requires clinicians to participate in a standardised training program and be assessed, by a delegated resource person, as competent in seven clinical skills. To implement the program with dietitians outside specialist centres, the program was adapted to include an intensive three week clinical placement at RBWH, with regular ongoing clinical supervision via telehealth on return to their usual workplace until clinical competency was achieved.

Results

This program was piloted with two dietitians (Bundaberg, Redcliffe), with both achieving competency in five out of seven clinical skills while on placement. Both sites established their own multidisciplinary gastrostomy clinics in which clinical supervision via telehealth will support the completion of the program in their local workplace.

Discussion

This program was successful in training dietitians in extended scope of practice for the management of gastrostomies outside of specialist centres. This program aligns with Ministerial Taskforce recommendations for optimizing the full scope of practice and extended scope of practice for allied health professionals. The training program is planned to continue, with at least two dietitians completing the program per year. The model may translate to other allied health disciplines in other practice areas and settings.