

Developing a physiotherapy competency framework.

Sturt R¹, Harding P²

¹ Alfred Health, Commercial Road Prahran, Victoria, 3181, R.Sturt@cgm.org.au

² Alfred Health, Commercial Road Prahran, Victoria, 3181, P.Harding@alfred.org.au

Background: Developing and ensuring competence in the physiotherapy workforce is particularly relevant in the current healthcare environment. As scope of practice changes, innovation and reform occur, and quality and safety strategies are developed, physiotherapists will be required to have the right qualifications, knowledge and skills to deliver safe and high quality health care.

Objectives: To develop a methodologically robust and evidence-based competency framework for the acute physiotherapy service at Alfred Health.

Methods: Through semi-structured interviews and focus groups 54 clinical activities were initially identified by physiotherapists as possibly requiring a competency-based assessment. This list of activities was refined through discussion and prioritisation using a risk-analysis tool. The tool was used to provide an overall risk rating, correlating with Alfred Health's Risk Rating Grid (2010) resulting in a final list of 17 activities. Senior physiotherapists in each clinical stream were identified to lead on the content development of 17 competency standards.

Discussion: Following competency standard development, competency assessment methods were developed by each competency lead. A corresponding 'assessor checklist' was created to describe the expected performance of an assessee. Assessment preparation 'workbooks' and self-assessments were also developed. Finally, documents were developed to support physiotherapist orientation to the framework, guide staff to identify and record competency progress, and orientate senior staff to the role of being a competency assessor. Prior to commencing implementation, a trial of competency standards and corresponding assessment recording tools and assessment preparation workbooks was undertaken. Implementation of the framework is ongoing. Staff involved in a pre-implementation trial described the competency process and documents as clear and consistent. The development of this competency framework provides physiotherapists at Alfred Health with an opportunity for structured evidence-based assessment of their workplace knowledge and skills. Further evaluation of the framework will be undertaken throughout its full implementation.