

Stepping into Research: An Allied Health Research Training Scheme

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Background: Allied Health professionals are increasingly encouraged to utilise research skills within their practice. While undergraduate allied health courses include some training in basic research skills, little is known about the most effective methods of continuing research training into professional life. Small group training and mentoring has been shown to be more effective in changing behaviour than didactic approaches to research training. The *Stepping into Research* training program was developed in 2008 using these principles at a large health service in metropolitan Melbourne (site 1), targeting clinicians who identified themselves as highly interested in research but lacking in skills and confidence. The program utilises a mixed approach of group learning and individual mentoring to guide participants through the process of conducting a systematic review of the literature. The aim of this project was to evaluate the *Stepping into Research* program 6 years after its implementation, including translation of the program to a second health service (site 2).

Methods: This mixed methods analysis included (1) collection of quantitative data on research outputs (publications, conference presentations and enrolment in further research training) from participants over 6 years, and (2) qualitative analysis of the experiences of the first cohort following translation of the program to site 2, with comparison to a similar evaluation previously conducted at site 1.

Results: Of 55 participants enrolled in the scheme, 49 have completed the program. Direct outputs from participants included 22 journal publications, 22 conference presentations and 5 PhD enrolments. Qualitative data suggests the participants and mentors at both sites viewed the program positively.

Discussion: The *Stepping into Research* training program leads to direct research outcomes and is received positively by participants. It has been successfully translated to a second health service and sustained in a large health service over 6 years within existing resources.