

Establishing the baseline – developing a consistent minimum data set for Allied Health in NSW

Steven Bowden¹, Paula Caffrey², Georgina Frank³, Lyn Biviano⁴, Patricia Bradd⁵, Bronwen Craig⁶

1 Illawarra Shoalhaven Local Health District, PO Box 1798, Wollongong, NSW 2500, steven.bowden@sesiahs.health.nsw.gov.au

2 Sydney Local Health District

3 Sydney Local Health District

4 Sydney Children's Hospital Network

5 South Eastern Sydney Local Health District

6 Western Sydney Local Health District

Background: Across Australia, there is a need for a standardised, relevant and easily administered dataset to describe Allied Health (AH) activity, interventions and outcomes. Previously, dataset development often occurred in silos, complicated by diverse AH disciplines, treatment settings and work patterns.

In 2013, following an AH Activity Based Funding (ABF) forum, the NSW Directors of AH commissioned a project to develop a universally-applicable and standardised activity dataset for AH. The project aimed to allow consistent data capture to better inform counting, coding and costing of AH activity and ultimately improved patient outcomes.

Methods: An initial dataset was compiled from NSW Local Health Districts (LHD)/Speciality Networks(SN) and compared to existing AH datasets (e.g. NAHCC). Several workshops were convened to obtain consensus agreement on Minimum Data Set (MDS) fields and definitions. A working party was established to refine the dataset.

It was recognised some discipline specific fields were necessary to provide applicability and relevance for each AH discipline. However, wherever possible a common dataset was used across AH disciplines. A project officer developed discipline-specific lists with state discipline advisory groups using an iterative process.

Results: The final NSW AH MDS includes 4 common and 3 discipline specific fields. The MDS will be integrated into the NSW electronic medical record and data capture systems to facilitate a common language across AH disciplines, service settings and models of care.

A state-wide training program is planned to promote data integrity within and between AH disciplines across NSW.

Discussion: Several lessons can be gleaned from the NSW experience.

1. Clear definitions of data fields are required in order to populate fields with useable dataset
2. Consistency of language and a robust review process are required when developing datasets
3. A rigorous approach to what is included in field lists is essential to keep datasets to a manageable size