

Measuring the research culture of allied health at Bendigo Health

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Background

Research evidence is required to inform practice and influence policy enabling high quality and efficient services to be delivered by allied health professions. The allied health disciplines are research emergent and currently lack the resources and infrastructure to produce high quality research evidence. Bendigo Health's strategic plan 2013-2018 Healthy Communities and World Class Healthcare is underpinned by the strategic enabler of "increasing our research capacity". This study aims to measure the current research capacity and culture of Bendigo Health's allied health staff, to understand barriers and enablers contributing to the allied health evidence base.

Methods

280 allied health staff at Bendigo Health were invited to participate in a cross sectional online survey. The Research Capacity and Culture (RCC) tool collected quantitative data in addition to demographic data. The disciplines of physiotherapy, occupational therapy, social work, psychology, speech pathology, dietetics, podiatry, exercise physiology, audiology and allied health assistance were included. Descriptive statistics were used to calculate RCC item variables and themes were identified in qualitative responses.

Results

There were 142 responses (51% response rate). Respondents rated their individual skill and success lower than their team and organisation skill and success except for those from psychology and dietetics disciplines. Developing skills, career advancement and increased job satisfaction were reported as motivators to conduct research, whereas a lack of time, other role taking priority and lack of research skills were reported as barriers.

Conclusion

This study recommends further investment in increasing research skills of allied health professionals including development of collaborative research positions and teams that will enable increased research productivity and impact.