

“An innovative approach to the implementation of training and development for Allied Health Assistants in the South Island of New Zealand.”

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Background

The Allied Health Assistant Development Project is an initiative of the Allied Health Scientific and Technical workstream of the South Island Workforce Development Hub. The overall goal was to develop a framework for Allied Health Assistant (AHA) training and development, into five regional District Health Boards (DHBs); using the Careerforce National Certificate in Health, Disability, and Aged Support. We will highlight that provision of appropriate training and support, can lead to the development of an AHA workforce with generic and flexible skills. Thereby ensuring the infrastructure is in place to support Allied Health Professionals to maximize their effectiveness; and support provision of Allied Health services to patients and their families in hospital, community and home.

Method

Using a qualitative methodology, AHA experiences were captured through focus groups, one on one interviews and surveys, throughout their training. A small group participated in competency evaluation tools. Analysis of captured data will be presented.

Results

There were twenty five AHAs in the pilot study. Eighty percent of the AHAs in the pilot finished the training. Subsequently over forty AHAs regionally have completed the qualification. AHAs in the pilot reported mostly a positive experience including feeling well supported in their workplaces. We will highlight the experiences of our collaborative regional approach to development of the AHA workforce. We will discuss the benefit, challenges and impact on the AHA workforce and emerging models of care.

Discussion

The AHA training is now embedded within daily practice in the five DHBs. An overview of the processes used for delivery and assessment of the qualification plus implementation and evaluation strategies will be presented. This project has resulted in the development of a qualified, more flexible workforce able to support Allied Health services across the regional DHB's; and forms the basis of our regional development framework for AHAs.