

Creating an Allied Health Rural Generalist Model of Care by implementing the Calderdale Framework using Clinical Re-design Methodology

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Background

Patients in rural areas receive limited Allied Health (AH) services. Rural health facilities service small, dispersed populations, thus, do not justify full-time posts for the core AH professions (Dietetics; Occupational Therapy; Physiotherapy; Speech Pathology; Podiatry; Psychology and Social Work). Historically in Mackay Hospital and Health Service (MHHS), part-time posts were allocated for each profession, which were difficult to recruit to. Vacancies were either unfilled, or existing staff, from other professions, informally extended their scope of practice to include clinical tasks that sat outside of their professional skill set, possibly without the requisite skills, training and governance to ensure best patient outcomes.

Methods

A transferable AH Rural Generalist Model of Care (MoC) has been developed, with representation from the core AH professions. The team operate in a professional skill-sharing and delegation model. New vacancies are advertised as AH Rural Generalist posts (to which a defined range of professions can be recruited, depending on population and service needs). The Calderdale Framework was used to define the scope of each role and potential to delegate clinical tasks.

The AH Rural Generalist MoC will provide a tele-rehabilitation service for patients, particularly those living in isolated areas. Tele-rehabilitation will also be used to support the professional skill-sharing element of the model through real time supervision and joint assessment.

Clinical re-design methodology was used to implement the project.

Results

A strategic vision has been written and a transferable Rural Generalist MoC established. The staffing structure has been re-configured, Rural Generalist role descriptions written and staff recruited. The scope of each role was defined using the Calderdale Framework and a competency based training program developed using standardised Clinical Task Instructions.

Discussion

The Calderdale Framework provides the structure to develop a Rural Generalist AH workforce, which operates in an expanded scope of practice through professional skill sharing.