

Allied Health Assistant training program for equipment sourcing and ordering

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Background

Equipment ordering is a time consuming process for Allied Health Professionals (AHPs). Whilst the prescription of equipment for patients needs to remain within the domain of AHPs, sourcing and ordering of prescribed equipment could be out-sourced. Allied Health Assistants (AHAs) provide valuable support to AHPs, with the potential for their scope of practice to be extended to include equipment sourcing/ordering, thereby providing a cost and time effective option for health services.

Methods

A training program for AHAs to source/order prescribed equipment was developed and implemented within the Allied Health Directorate at The Royal Children's Hospital. The program comprised a resource folder (sourcing/ordering protocol, prescription form, example forms, list of external hire companies, equipment photos) and a tutorial (covering types of equipment and practice ordering/sourcing examples). Initially, AHAs completed equipment procurement with the AHP, until competency was achieved. A survey of AHA confidence in types of equipment and sourcing/ordering equipment was completed pre and post training (self-rating scale of 1-5 where 5 is extremely confident). Time spent by AHAs on equipment sourcing/ordering was also documented following program implementation.

Results

Four AHAs completed the training program in 2014. Survey results indicated increased AHA confidence post-training in types of equipment (median of 2 pre-training; 4.5 post-training) and ability to source/order equipment (median of 1 pre-training; 4 post-training). Over 12 months, AHAs spent 30.9 hours sourcing/ordering equipment for 37 patients and AHPs spent 7.2 hours for 11 patients when AHAs were unavailable.

Discussion

AHAs can effectively source/order equipment for AHPs when a training program is provided specifically targeting this skill. This allocation of workload to AHA's scope of practice offers a time and cost effective alternative, hence the program is ongoing. AHAs are an important resource in the health setting and the implications of this program for other health services will be discussed.