

Allied health assistants in NSW – a structured approach

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Allied Health Assistants (AHAs) have been an emerging and critical part of the allied health workforce for a long time however, the knowledge and skills to work with AHAs has traditionally been learnt informally on the job. In light of this, the skills of Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) to work effectively with AHAs have been variable. With the increasing patient demands within health, and increased need for diversity in service delivery, more attention has shifted to this vital part of the allied health workforce and the significant contribution along with potential they bring to improving patient care. These workforce changes bring with it a need for professional development for AHPs working with AHAs. NSW has developed structures and resources to support this professional development need.

This presentation will describe the approach used in NSW to support this workforce, along with some preliminary evaluation information. The NSW Ministry of Health provided funding for the creation of AHA Coordinator positions in each local health district. The role of these positions is to support and grow the AHA workforce. In addition they developed the 'Allied Health Assistant Framework' to provide guidance to AHPs and Managers in how to effectively support workforce development of AHAs. The Health Education and Training Institute (HETI) have developed two resources to support both the AHA Coordinators and the framework. These are an online training program, accessible by all NSW Health staff and a train the trainer package of training, provided to the AHA Coordinators to provide them with the tools to provide training as relevant within their Health districts.