

What are the benefits of an allied health team in an Emergency Department?

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Background

Since the introduction of allied health teams to Emergency Departments in public hospitals in Australia in early 2000, clinicians and researchers have found it challenging to find meaningful ways to measure the impact of their work due to varied contexts and the complexity of the allied health discipline mix. This presentation explores the practice and contribution of the allied health team from the broader Emergency Department perspective, presenting findings from a staff satisfaction survey as a way of exploring the contribution of the team to patient care and discharge processes within the Department.

Methods

A staff satisfaction survey of Emergency Department staff (medical, nursing and allied health) was completed as a quality activity by the team in 2004 and then replicated in 2014 (n=169) to explore recommendations for improvement of the team and to document what appears to be working. The survey examined three key working areas: referral process, communication and patient care. Three questions were included to further explore staff experience of the team and this particular model of care.

Results

The survey received a 69% response rate. Results show a high satisfaction rate from staff of the Allied Health team working in the Emergency Department. Staff reported being satisfied with the team's communication, patient care and response to referrals. Specific benefits reported by staff were: discharge safety, patient flow and freeing up of staff.

Discussion

Staff responded positively to allied health involvement. Staff requested extended hours and increased staffing to provide a seven-day a week service. Staff provided insight into the intricate service and additional skill set that allied health team provides to a busy Emergency Department whilst trying to meet hospital targets and ensure patient safety.