

Allied health and MHPN – a growing connection

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Background

The Mental Health Professionals' Network (MHPN), a unique, federally-funded initiative, has developed an effective, transferable model that aims to improve interdisciplinary, collaborative mental health care practices in Australia's primary health care sector.

As the only Australian initiative with this brief, and a growing body of evidence demonstrating that improved consumer outcomes, increased workforce efficiency, and an enhanced experience of seeking and receiving care can result from the improved clinical pathways and better informed referrals that are developed by effective interdisciplinary, collaborative care practices, MHPN's model is worthy of examination.

Methods

The MHPN model engages practitioners in two programs that encourage networking and interdisciplinary professional development that directly promote interdisciplinary practice. The first has supported 11,000 practitioners over four consecutive years to attend local practitioner network meetings. Networks are located across the country to meet up to four times a year. The second is a national online professional development program producing live interactive webinars featuring leading experts modelling interdisciplinary practice. A range of allied health practitioners including psychologists, social workers, occupational therapists, speech pathologists, and dietitians have participated in both programs.

Results

Consistently high, voluntary participation rates in each program strongly indicate that MHPN is meeting a professional development need. Evaluations of the initiative have also demonstrated that attitudes to collaborative care have significantly changed over time.

Importantly, the model is transferable.

Discussion

This presentation will:

- share the learnings of MHPN's success in the mental health sector
- outline how the MHPN model was successfully employed to help strengthen the clinical response to demand generated by the Royal Commission Into Institutional Response to Child Sexual Abuse
- describe how the model has led to the establishment of over 30 networks that support interdisciplinary practice at the interface between mental health and chronic disease including diabetes, cancer, and chronic pain.