

Developing leadership capability through Allied Health ward facilitator roles

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Background

With the demand for acute beds and patient complexity increasing so does the imperative to provide effective Allied Health (AH) services. In 2014, we implemented an Allied Health Ward Facilitator (AHWF) role at Northern Health to develop highly performing, supported AH teams. The AHWFs were provided with orientation to the role. Monthly meetings and professional development sessions provided a forum to discuss any issues and to support and develop leadership skills. The effectiveness of the role was evaluated 12 months post implementation.

Method

Evaluation consisted of pre and post online surveys with two cohorts; AH Clinicians (n=38 vs. n=46), Nursing and Medical Staff (n=32 vs. n=11). The AHWF (n=11) were only surveyed post implementation. The survey consisted of a qualitative questions centred around the effectiveness of the role to coordinate and facilitate timely assessment and discharge planning to assist with patient flow.

Results

100% of the AHWF reported feeling better skilled and supported to solve AH issues and had a forum to escalate concerns. AHWFs felt professional relationships were strengthened and they positively impacted co-ordination of care.

AH clinicians reported increased morale, support and work satisfaction and that leadership and assistance to resolve issues had improved. Medical and nursing reported that AH worked well together, communicated effectively and enhanced patient flow. Some feedback reported the absence of AH leadership and coordination of care. This could be in part due to the poor survey response from this cohort (n=10 compared to a baseline of n=32 in 2014).

Discussion

Overall, this role has been identified as being beneficial for AH. During the implementation phase, there was an unexpected high turnover of AHWFs. This may have also impacted on the poor responses from medical and nursing staff. Working with these disciplines to further integrate this role within the interdisciplinary ward team is required.