

# **An investigation into student contribution to physiotherapy clinical services within Queensland Health**

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## **Background:**

In the context of the increasing demand for both health services as well as student placements, it is important to understand, maximise and provide evidence of student contribution to health service delivery. Current literature provides qualitative descriptors; however there is limited research available that quantifies student contribution. The primary aim of this investigation was to determine the contribution pre-registration physiotherapy students make to service delivery by analysing clinical activity data.

## **Methods:**

After obtaining ethical clearance, a retrospective audit of student clinical activity data was conducted at five hospitals, within three key physiotherapy clinical areas, over four (five week) placement blocks. Data collected represented 29% of all key clinical area placements provided by the Queensland Public Health System (QPHS) in 2014. Data was statistically analysed and included an examination of student occasions of service (OOS); length of occasion of service (LOOS); models of clinical education support; and clinical educator:student (CE:student) ratios.

In addition, semi-structured interviews were performed at each of the five hospitals; as well as state-wide surveys of QPHS Physiotherapy Directors and clinical educators.

## **Results:**

Analysis of student clinical activity data demonstrated that the 231 student placements produced over 19000 total OOS across the three clinical areas. All key clinical areas demonstrated a statistically significant increase in the number of student OOS over the course of a clinical placement. Additionally, a concomitant decrease in student LOOS can be observed for all key clinical areas over the course of a placement experience. Clinical ratios, model comparison, facility variability and clinical area variability were also analysed in each clinical area.

## **Discussion:**

This presentation will provide an overview of key project findings and recommendations. It will also explore service delivery implications and discuss applicability to other health professions. Models and CE:student ratios will be discussed including methods of enhancing student contribution to the delivery of efficient and effective health care.