

# Development of a credentialing package to support the introduction of advanced practice hand therapy roles

Nicole Byrne<sup>1</sup>, Kate Cranwell<sup>2</sup>, Elizabeth Witherow<sup>3</sup>

1 Western Health, Gordon St Footscray, 3011 [Nicole.Rantall@wh.org.au](mailto:Nicole.Rantall@wh.org.au).

2 Western Health, Gordon St Footscray, 3011

3 Western Health, Gordon St Footscray, 3011 [Elizabeth.Witherow@wh.org.au](mailto:Elizabeth.Witherow@wh.org.au).

## Background

There is growing interest in advanced and extended scope of practice roles in Allied Health. In an effort to manage patient flow and outcomes, a large public health care network sought to introduce advanced practice hand therapy roles. Robust governance structures and credentialing processes are essential however, to ensure that clinicians practicing in these roles are appropriately skilled. The overall aim of the project was to develop and implement a credentialing package to support the delivery of consistent high quality care by advanced practice hand therapy clinicians in a therapy led clinic.

## Methods

A comprehensive credentialing package of advanced practice competencies, supported by assessment tools and learning modules, was developed by senior hand therapy staff in collaboration with the Head of Plastic Surgery. An initial credentialing package, together with re-credentialing documentation, was developed.

## Results

The credentialing package was ratified by the organisation's Allied Health Credentialing and Professional Advisory committee, tasked with governance of advanced practice allied health roles across the organisation. Following completion of the advanced practice competencies, three senior clinicians have been credentialed as advanced practitioners, and are practicing in an advanced practice therapy led clinic. Preliminary data evaluating the impact of these roles suggests that clinicians perceive they have the necessary skills to work effectively, patient waiting times to access hand therapy have been reduced and medical staff value the service.

## Discussion

The development and implementation of a credentialing package is a useful way to support the implementation of advanced practice roles. Future directions include rolling out the therapy led clinic credentialing package to other hand therapy staff, to increase the sustainability of the clinic. The team envisage using this framework to guide the development of other potential advanced practice initiatives, such as screening clinics for non surgical management of patients currently waiting on a surgical waitlist.