

# Allied Health: tracing the meaning of the term

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## Background

The term Allied Health is well entrenched in the nomenclature of the Australian and New Zealand healthcare systems. It is a term though that has a variety of definitions, and there have been various attempts to define who is “in” and who is “out” from a professional point of view. A question that is not readily asked however is how did we get to where we are with this term Allied Health?

## Methods

A literature search of established databases was conducted as well as a search of the grey literature as to the use of the term allied health, and identified sources were accessed and analysed.

## Results

Within the discoverable literature there was a clear pattern as to the origin and the use of the term allied health internationally. How the term is used was noted to vary from the sources of North America, the United Kingdom, Australia and New Zealand.

## Discussion

The term allied health is noted to have origin within the North American literature. The development of the term is noted to be one of control in this context from the paternal stance that the American Medical Association took in overseeing the accreditation of “other” health professions. As such it is often seen as a derogatory term and professions actively sought to distance themselves from it. Within the United Kingdom, there is a traceable evolution of the term within policy development. In Australia there is an emergent use of the term around the management of “other” health professions which more recently has taken on a component of policy. New Zealand can trace the use of the term associated primarily with strategic leadership of the “other” health professions, and has only in current cycles become involved in more direct management of the allied health professions.