

'The customer is always right' - The lived experience of community project implementation.

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Helen Keller said "Alone we can do so little; together we can do so much". What Helen left out, was that partnerships are hard work and as renowned partnership academic Prof Patricia Rogers said "Don't partner unless you have to".

Despite this, eighteen months ago, a major tertiary hospital and a community health service embarked on a partnership to work with community agencies and consumer groups; with the aim of together improving the health outcomes and well being of stroke survivors. This presentation discusses what they learnt along the way – not about stroke management – but about partnership, community participation and community program delivery.

We know that the health system is not confined to wards, or primary-care clinics and we also know the contexts and expectations of consumers and partners differ dependent on the setting they come from and the professional framework in which they operate. This can lead to a rich and fraught lived experience in program delivery. We work in an environment where we are encouraged to work outside the walls of our agencies and accredited against our ability to engage with community and consumers. Is this (often frustrating) experience worth the opportunity to tackle health issues external to traditional health service environments?

This session will discuss the lived experience of two senior health service managers embedding para-clinical programs within a community setting, assisted by community and consumer agencies. It will take a frank approach to discussing some of the barriers to program delivery in community settings and use case studies and program logic evaluations to explain the accommodations necessary to deliver programs which meet the needs of consumers and the community and can be delivered by clinicians.

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