Clinical education and training for Allied Health Assistants: A systematic review to support an external evaluation of clinical education and training for Allied Health Assistants

This project was funded by the ClinEdQ Research and Publication Initiative to provide a systematic review of the literature on clinical education and training for allied health assistants. The summary below outlines the key outcomes of the project.

Summary

The project identifies allied health assistant education and training interventions and their impact on a number of factors through the review of literature. A systematic review of the literature was conducted (according to methods detailed within the Joanna Briggs Institute Reviewer's Manual), followed by a non-systematic review.

Five questions were developed to guide the output of the information. The questions and responses are:

- What are effective or appropriate strategies to increase or promote recruitment and retention of health assistants in vocational training programs?

  Motivating factors are individual desire to progress professionally, guarantee of employment following training, introduction of key skills from the beginning of the program, the ability to learn and earn, flexible course times, and further options to progress in professional training. Common barriers to recruitment are prohibitive costs of training, lack of time, issues of travel, distance and a lack of recognition of training. Common barriers to retention are overly ‘academic’ course content, fast pace of training.

- What are effective or appropriate strategies to establish the health assistant role as a recognised delegated clinical role and promote their inclusion in models of care?

  Strategies to promote inclusion are creation of empowered work teams, implementing models of collaborative learning, analysing and redesigning the assistant role, use of educational courses and workshops. Issues to be addressed are relationship between assistants and professionals, affects on the assistants role and how it is perceived, training programs, accountability, delegation and supervision.

- What are effective or appropriate strategies to promote consistency and standardisation of vocational training delivered to health assistants?

  Clear need perceived for consistency but currently little consistency.
• What are effective or appropriate strategies to adapt vocational training programs to local context in healthcare?

  Training does need to be contextualised for local contexts, and to take into account population spread, rural health, cultural issues, infrastructure, and local healthcare shortages.

• What are effective or appropriate strategies to increase the relevance and understanding of vocational training among allied health professionals and health assistants?

  Can increase the relevance of vocational training by using adult learning techniques, creating relevance to future work, surveying entry level practice, learning collaboratively, and engaging in continuing professional development.

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Read the full report (PDF, 1290kb).