Evaluation of a Partnership to Provide Outreach Allied Health Care to a Small Rural Community

Abstract:

Background: In a rural community on Australia’s north east coast, a resident GP operates from a Queensland Health facility. Outreach health services are supplied to the town by Queensland Health, and the Divisions of General Practice to the north or south of the town. However, the outreach services are not regular, or utilised to their full capacity. Thus, a partnership was formed with all the stakeholders to provide regular reliable services that could be accessed by residents within their own community.

Aims: 1) Measure the partnership of the organisations 
2) Measure uptake of services by residents.

Methods: Quantitative data was collected on community demographics and health determinants, and patient use of private and public health services. Qualitative data will be collected to 1) measure success of the partnership and 2) evaluate the project using a three tiered framework consisting of:

- Manager survey to measure inputs
- Health service provider survey to measure process
- Client survey to measure outcomes

Results: To date, results indicate context issues are a barrier to implementing the project plan. For example, not all partners share the same concept of what the project is trying to achieve. It seems there is no clear origin or rationale for the project. Another barrier to unifying the group is the high turnover of key individuals and lack of follow up from the original drivers of the project.

Implications for policy, delivery or practice: This project provides information on partnership between government and non-government organisations to provide health services to an underserved community and how this impacts on the recipients of those services. Results from this project, will provide vital information on forming partnerships between these organisations.