World Social Work Day Forum: fostering a culture of sharing practice and research

In New South Wales, the South Eastern Sydney Local Health District (SESLHD) holds an annual World Social Work Day Forum. Established in 2011 it aims to foster a culture of sharing practice and research while developing social worker's presentation skills.

Method:

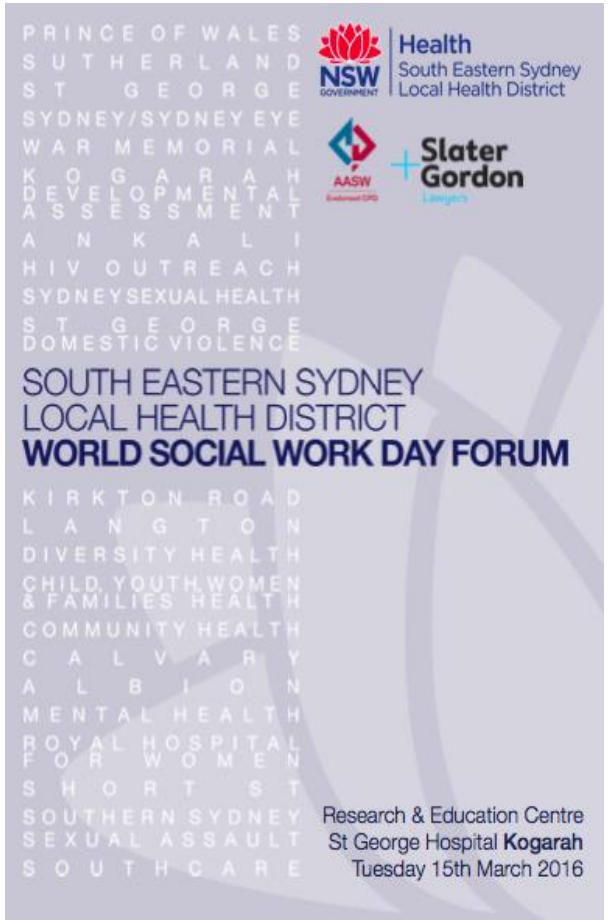
Having never been formally reviewed from a presenter's perspective, an online survey of past presenters of the SESLHD World Social Work Day Forum was conducted in 2016.

The objective of the survey was to ascertain whether the initial aims of the Forum had been achieved. The hypothesis being that the Forum attracted presenters who were less experienced social workers that then went on to pursue further opportunities to present their work.

Results:

The hypothesis was disproved, with findings showing the majority of respondents had 10-20 years' experience, and post-graduate qualifications.

A review of presentation topics also showed the evolving depth of practice and research among those participating in the Forum. It was also noted that a significant proportion of respondents had remained working within the local health district since presenting.



Opportunities available in the Forum process:

- Abstract writing workshops
- Presenting rehearsals
- Practice resource mentoring
- Poster presentation development
- Writing for publication
- Networking and collaboration
- Event planning
- Abstract evaluation

Significance of the findings to Allied Health:

Creating a supported space for people to share their practice and research within their disciplines allows growth for the individual, discipline and organisation.

It creates an environment with enhanced academic rigour and can create a cultural shift towards actively pursuing and developing evidence based practice.

Alongside this, from an organisational perspective it contributes to workforce retention strategies and assists with building capacity and capability in staff.

Elisabeth Long elisabeth.long@health.nsw.gov.au | Bobbi Henao Urrego bobbi.henaourrego@health.nsw.gov.au

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