



Exploring the professional identity of allied health staff within organisational structures

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Background

Professional identity considers one's self as perceived in relation to a professional and one's membership of it. Little is known about the professional identity of allied health staff, nor has change in professional identity that may arise from organisational change been reported. Our large health network previously had three allied health workforce structures; these are being merged into one large allied health structure more closely aligned with service delivery, shown in Figure 1.

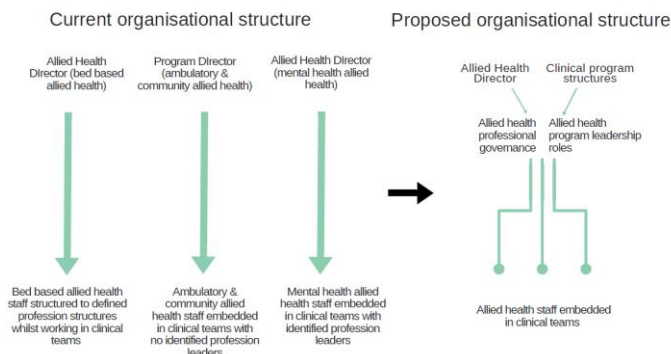


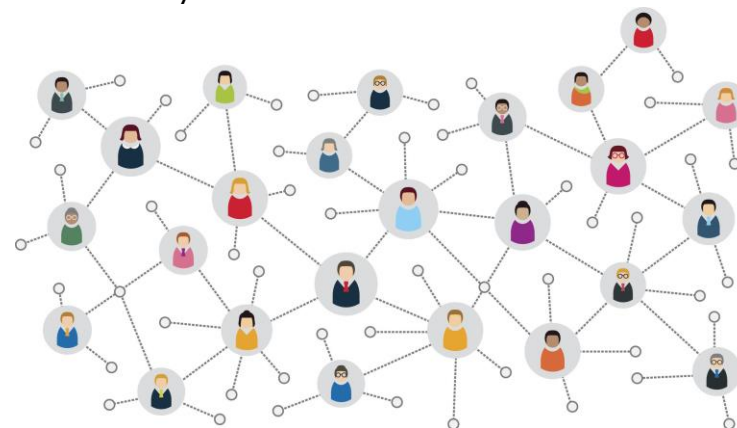
Figure 1: Organisational chart highlighting key aspects of the current and proposed allied health structure

Aim

This study aimed to understand the professional identity of allied health staff prior to the restructure.

Methods

Allied health staff were invited to participate in an online questionnaire incorporating a validated professional identity scale. This approach enabled comparison across the three workforce structures, in bed based services (including acute and subacute care), ambulatory and community services, and mental health services (including specialist mental health services and alcohol and drug services). Descriptive and statistical analyses were undertaken.



Results

High professional identity was identified amongst allied health staff across each workforce structure (n=227 staff, 23.4% response rate). Significant differences between bed based allied health and ambulatory and community allied health were noted across several individual statements, and in the overall score of professional identity.

Significance of the findings to allied health

Change in professional identity in over time in the work place, the impact of practice experience and the effect of organizational structure (or changes in structure) have not previously been explored in allied health. Differences in professional identity exist among allied health staff belonging to different workforce structures. These should be taken into account during organisational change.

The planned evaluation post-restructure will inform the understanding of the impact of change in organisational structure on professional identity in allied health.

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