



What Is Effective Clinical Supervision for Physiotherapists? A Qualitative Study

Dr David Snowdon^{1,2,3}, Shae Cooke¹, Kim Williams¹, Grant Scroggie¹, Kate Lawler¹, Prof Nick Taylor^{1,4}

¹Eastern Health, ²Peninsula Health, ³Monash University, ⁴La Trobe University

Aim:

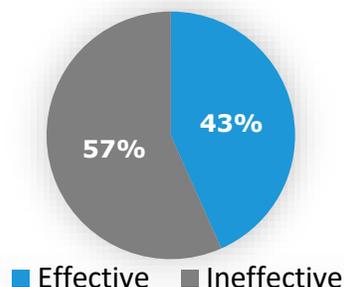
To explore physiotherapists' perceptions about aspects of clinical supervision that may help to facilitate effective clinical supervision.

Background:

It is recommended that physiotherapists participate in regular clinical supervision, involving an experienced physiotherapist guiding the practice of a less experienced physiotherapist, to ensure patient safety and high quality of care¹. Clinical supervision bridges the gap in professional experience, and has been associated with improvements in processes of care and subsequent patient health outcomes².

A survey of physiotherapists undertaken at Eastern Health using the Manchester Clinical Supervision Scale (MCSS-26) found that less than half of physiotherapist perceived that supervision was effective in supporting them in their professional role³. Despite organisation guidelines and processes in place that aim to support clinical supervision for allied health professionals.

Perceived Effectiveness of Supervision³



■ Effective ■ Ineffective

Method:

Individual semi-structured interviews were conducted on a purposive sample physiotherapists from Eastern Health. Qualitative analysis was undertaken using an interpretive description approach.

'I think the strength of informal is that it's timely, generally at the time that you have the problem...' (participant)

Participants:

Twenty-one physiotherapists participated in the study.

71% of participants were female

Average age = 33 years

Participants had received supervision for an average of 5 years

Most participated in monthly sessions of 30-60 minutes

The most common model of clinical supervision was reflective, with sessions scheduled separate from clinical practice.

'I find hands on supervision quite helpful you can problem solve together and learn practically' (participant)

Results:

Participants preferred that supervision:

Focus on both clinical and non-clinical professional skills development

Focus on exploring emotions was perceived as less valuable

Is direct, rather than reflective

Where a supervisor directly assists with clinical skills (e.g. patient management) and non-clinical skills (e.g. a project).

Allows access to both 'formal' and 'informal' supervision

Where access to supervision is available as issues arise

Involves a supervisor who is readily accessible

Is driven by learning needs

Rather than organisational processes

Significance to Allied Health:

It is recommended that these results are considered when developing support structures regarding clinical supervision for physiotherapists, where 'sit down' reflective practice is traditionally emphasised.

Contact: shae.cooke@easternhealth.org.au



