

Assessing and guiding system improvement for delivery of preventive health care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians: Validating a data collection and measurement tool

Aim

To refine the ABCD Systems Assessment Tool for supporting Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander primary health care (PHC) services to improve links with their community, and with other health and social services in the community, for preventive care.

Overview

Background: Improving levels of delivery and quality of preventive health care is challenging because it requires a transformational change in the organisation of health care delivery systems. Specifically, effective preventive health care requires moving beyond clinical services to include links with the community and inter-sectoral collaborations. Health systems struggle with how this reorientation could be achieved.

Since 2002, PHC services across Australia have used the Audit and Best Practice for Chronic Disease (ABCD) Systems Assessment Tool to undertake a structured, systematic assessment of health centre systems that support good clinical care. This has resulted in improved health system functioning, delivery of care and outcomes in diabetes, chronic diseases and maternal health. However, of the system components considered necessary for delivering high-quality health care, component (4) – *Links with Community, other Health Services and Organisations* – is the least understood and tested for the delivery of preventive health care.

Project description: Using qualitative and quantitative data from the ABCD continuous quality improvement (CQI) program, we aimed:

- + To understand how PHC services link with community, other health services and non-health services in their community.
- + To determine whether these linkages improved with increased systems assessment cycles.
- + To ascertain whether linkages were associated with improved delivery of important preventive chronic disease indicators.

We hypothesised that PHC community linkages would play an important role in improving obesity, risky alcohol use and the delivery of social and emotional wellbeing services within a primary health care setting. Our finding was that PHC community linkages did not improve over successive use of the systems assessment cycles. However, there were some effects for different components of clinical–community links and different preventive health indicators. We also found that systems are not well established or are patchy for linkages with community, and not specifically designed or strengthened to support the delivery of preventive health care.

In March 2018, we secured funding from the University of Technology Sydney (external partner) to undertake a review of the ABCD Systems Assessment Tool. The review will examine

how the tool could be improved to support and enable PHC services to assess and guide improvements for ‘community linkages’ in the delivery of preventive health care. Interviews with CQI facilitators and primary health care practitioners and researchers are now underway as part of this review.

Outputs to date

- + A manuscript analysing the ABCD dataset is in preparation.
- + Team Leader Nikki Percival was invited by The Partnership Prevention Centre (TAPPC) to present at the Primary Health Network Prevention Symposium in Canberra on 23 August 2018.
- + Representatives from the North Queensland Primary Health Network have expressed interest as a potential research partner in the CRE-IQI expression of interest: *Strengthening Systems and Collaborations for Chronic Disease Prevention in Indigenous Communities*.
- + The research has also attracted strong interest from potential research partners in other jurisdictions as well as national policy stakeholders.

Key messages

Primary health care systems need to be stronger, or designed differently, to support health centre–community linkages for preventive health care.

Next steps

Results from the current review of the ABCD Systems Assessment Tool will be available and discussed as part of a masterclass offered in conjunction with the upcoming CRE-IQI biennial meeting in October 2018.

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<i>Project status</i>	Current
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<i>Dates</i>	January – December 2018
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