

Evaluating the CQI approach for program impact and diversification of the Remote Management Program: A feasibility study

Aim

To evaluate the impact of a continuous quality improvement (CQI) approach on the Remote Management Program (RMP). This includes the feasibility of upscaling the program; the program's relevance for Indigenous managers; and investigating how a customised management program could better meet the needs of all remote health managers.

Overview

Background: The Remote Management Program is a professional development program customised to meet the needs of Indigenous, allied health and nurse managers working in remote and isolated health services. When the RMP was piloted in 2016, a review of the program revealed that the managers who participated in the pilot had found it beneficial. This research project was conducted through a partnership comprising CRANaplus, the Australian College of Health Service Management and James Cook University to build on the insights gained from the pilot program review.

Project description: A scoping literature review to examine the characteristics of studies that use CQI approaches to evaluate management development programs found that CQI processes are not widely used. However, when a CQI approach was employed, 'action learning' (i.e. the application of skills in a workplace-based project) was the most frequently used CQI approach to evaluation beyond the level of participant satisfaction.

The subsequent evaluation of the RMP revealed that the workplace-based CQI projects undertaken by RMP participants potentially provide evidence that is suitable for conducting a cost-benefit analysis of the program. The evaluation also investigated the feasibility of future research into diversifying and scaling-up the RMP.

Outputs

The combination of industry/academic publications and presentations arising from this study means that the research findings have reached a wide audience. The outputs include:

- + 6 newsletter articles
- + 2 academic publications (one in press and one under review)
- + 1 conference paper (under review)
- + 1 abstract for a 2019 conference (submitted).

Key messages

- + There is potential benefit in managers leveraging support from existing CQI systems (e.g. CQI Facilitators, Managers' Systems Assessment Tool) when implementing their workplace-based CQI projects. This in turn may increase the benefits of the RMP and CQI for health services and provide ongoing CQI support for remote managers.
- + There is a sense that the current format and content of the RMP is suitable for all managers as long as the current small group, individualised format continues.
- + Project findings support the view that managers have a significant influence over remote workplaces and the successful implementation of change. Therefore, if managers are supportive of CQI systems and processes, CQI is more likely to gain traction in remote health services.
- + Data show that the RMP has a role in improving the health and wellbeing of participants, as it appears that attending the workshop and connecting with others who can relate to their 'remote' management experience is beneficial in itself.

Next steps

- + To build on the potential evidence identified in this case study for a more rigorous research design to investigate the potential of the RMP's workplace-based CQI projects for conducting a cost-benefit analysis.
- + To undertake a more in-depth analysis of the transition from clinician to manager in remote settings to further understand the barriers and enablers of developing management competence and good individual self-care, i.e., investigating the reasons why some managers thrive yet others barely survive.

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