



Delegated clinical roles of Allied Health Assistants



Is the Certificate IV in Allied Health Assistance associated with enhanced clinical practice in rural NSW?

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Aim: This research aimed to determine whether completion of the Certificate IV in Allied Health Assistance was associated with an enhanced scope of practice for Allied Health Assistants in rural NSW who hold this qualification in contrast with those who do not, by exploring the following questions:

- Is there a significant difference in the duties undertaken by staff who hold the Certificate IV in Allied Health Assistance, when compared to those who do not?
- Is there a significant difference in the proportion of available time used in the provision of clinical care, between those who hold the Certificate IV in Allied Health Assistance and those who do not?, and
- Do staff who hold the Certificate IV in Allied Health Assistance report a change in their clinical duties as a result of completion?

Methods: A cross sectional study was conducted using a questionnaire. Allied Health Assistants employed in Physiotherapy, Occupational Therapy, Dietetics, Speech Pathology, Podiatry, or multidisciplinary roles combining these disciplines in six rural Local Health Districts were invited to participate.

Results: Sixty seven of 153 questionnaires were returned from six Local Health Districts, generating a response rate of 44%. Results indicate that the difference in the number of clinical duties between those holding the Certificate IV in Allied Health Assistance (Group One: mean 16.45, sd 4.89) and those not (Group Two: mean 13.41, sd 5.74) is statistically significant ($t(65) = 2.3338, p = 0.002$) with those certified performing more clinical duties than those not certified. The difference in the proportion of available time spent providing delegated clinical care between Group One and Group Two ($\chi^2(3) = 37.653, p < 0.0001$) is statistically significant with those holding the qualification spending a greater proportion of their time delivering clinical care when compared with those who do not. Perceptions of the impact of the Certificate IV in Allied Health Assistance on clinical roles varies, however emergent themes indicate that the majority of those certified believe that role change has not occurred following completion.

Implications: While qualified Allied Health Assistants are undertaking a greater range of clinical activities and spending more time in clinical care, impediments may exist to completion of the Certificate IV in Allied Health Assistance amongst currently non-qualified staff, and to transition to an enhanced scope of clinical practice for those who have completed the qualification.

For the full report on this project visit our website, follow the link to the Rural Research Capacity Building Program and click on 'view completed projects'

Angela Firth holds a Bachelor of Applied Science – Speech Pathology and a Master of Public Health. Angela is employed as Allied Health Projects Coordinator for Western NSW Local Health District, and supports the clinical practice of Allied Health Assistant staff. Her research investigated the association between the Certificate IV in Allied Health Assistance qualification and the clinical roles of Allied Health Assistants in rural NSW.

