



“Give me something I can use”

## An exploration of how senior nurses and midwives, in a regional setting, acquire and integrate coaching skills into routine practice: a grounded theory study



Rae Conway, Northern NSW LHD

[rae.conway@ncahs.health.nsw.gov.au](mailto:rae.conway@ncahs.health.nsw.gov.au)

### Background

Organisations invest significant resources in leadership coaching programs, in an attempt to ensure that coaching is embedded as a core function of the manager’s role. However, even after training, many managers are still not able to undertake this role successfully. The process by which ‘manager as coach’ training translates into successful practice outcomes in the workplace has remained largely unexplored. This study describes how leaders acquire and successfully integrate coaching skills into routine practice. It focuses on a group of 20 senior nurses and midwives who attended a 12 month Leadership Coaching Program provided by the North Coast Area Health Service in 2010. The implications of the findings for improving the effectiveness of coaching training will also be discussed.

### Methods

The data collected included interviews with 20 senior nurses and midwives, and nine reflective practice diaries. The study used grounded theory principles informed by symbolic interactionism, to construct a model grounded in the data.

### Results

The model represents the acquisition and integration of coaching skills among senior nurses and midwives as a multifactorial, dynamic and mutually influential process. The outcomes of training ranged from inappropriate and limited use of the coaching skills through to integrated and transformational practice change. These outcomes were engendered by the influences of three main determinants (pre-existing individual perceptions, program elements and contemporaneous catalysts). The relationships between each of the three determinants drive activators such as courage, motivation, commitment and confidence, without which learning and integration could not occur.

### Conclusion

The study offers new insights into how senior nurses and midwives acquire coaching skills and integrate them into their routine practice. The model has implications for both training and organisational support of leadership coaching programs. When organisations and facilitators address the influential factors identified in the study, there may be enhanced uptake and integration of coaching skills in the workplace, thereby maximizing the return on training investment.

*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’*

Rae has 30 years experience in health including clinical, educational, managerial and executive roles both in the public and private sectors. She has a Degree in Health Science (BHSc) and a Master of Business Administration (MBA) majoring in Workforce Development. She has a strong commitment to the provision of quality care through improving the leadership capacity of nurses and midwives as evidenced by this study.



[www.heti.nsw.gov.au](http://www.heti.nsw.gov.au)