Occupational Therapy Capability Framework of Clinical Practice for Palliative Care: Ensuring workforce skills meets the needs of the future

Jodie Nixon1, Geraldine Hodson2, Lauren Fulp3 and Julie-Anne Hendry3
1Princess Alexandra Hospital, Brisbane; 2Metro South Palliative Care Service, Queensland; 3Gold Coast Palliative Care Service, Queensland

AIM
To develop an evidence based capability framework to ensure that occupational therapy is ready for the challenges of palliative care in the future by:
1. Consistency of service provision for occupational therapy within a palliative care caseload throughout Queensland regardless of setting
2. Consistent awareness of learning and development opportunities to ensure high level service provision is achieved

METHOD
A working party of OT practitioners in palliative care from across Queensland convened in January 2015. The group of 13 clinicians with an interest in palliative care came from a variety of tertiary, rural, community and inpatient palliative care health facilities. The clinicians experience ranged from novice to advanced clinician level.

Benchmarking and literature search established that no framework existed in Australia for OT’s practising in this area.

The group identified appropriate clinical areas and domains of competence for inclusion based on the specific specialist requirements in working with palliative care patients. An existing draft framework developed by the Gold Coast Hospital and Health Service was adapted to create a comprehensive capability framework suitable for a variety of skill levels and clinical settings.

Nine practice domains were identified from the existing best evidence and each of these domains were broken down into:
- Expectations at each professional level
- Appropriate learning and development opportunities

Meetings were held via tele-health video conferencing on a monthly basis. Smaller working groups communicated via face to face, phone and email and worked on a subset of the nine domains before presenting back to the working group for review.

RESULTS
An evidence based capability framework has been developed that describes the expectations and learning opportunities desired for OT practitioners from assistant through to advanced level to practice OT in the palliative care setting.

The framework is used by practitioners and professional line managers for self-development, clinical supervision/peer review and for identification of professional development requirements.

The document assists in identifying workforce level requirements for service planning and development.

The nine domains identified were:
1. Communication
2. Grief and loss
3. Research and knowledge translation
4. Quality improvement
5. Management and leadership
6. Palliative sedation
7. Care planning and collaborative practice
8. Continuing professional development/education
9. Clinical practice

CONCLUSION
An evidence based occupational therapy capability framework contributes to the delivery of specialist, appropriate, evidence based interventions by OT’s in the palliative care setting. This framework will encourage ongoing workforce improvements as palliative care moves into the challenging future.

To obtain the capability framework (expected online publication October 2015):
Contact: Geraldine.Hodson@health.qld.gov.au

REFERENCES

13th Australian Palliative Care Conference
Fit for the Future