

Skilled Cancer Professionals Program Evaluation

Background

The Cancer Institute NSW Skilled Cancer Professionals Program was designed to build individual capacity and enhance the competencies of individual cancer care professionals working in NSW, through skill and knowledge improvement.

Eleven (see box) of the 13* program initiatives delivered and implemented during 2004 – 30 June 2009 were evaluated to determine their contribution to the practice of world's best evidence cancer care.

Methods

The evaluation considered outcomes for each initiative against its objectives, their intended reach and in context of other Cancer Institute NSW programs developed to enhance cancer control.

Evaluation methods included:

- A literature review to identify comparable programs and benchmark for best practice in capacity building
- 31 qualitative semi-structured interviews with key stakeholders
- Content analysis of documents, including guidelines
- Analysis of Cancer Institute NSW datasets, including progress and final report data
- An online survey of participants and their supervisors (n = 122; 30 per cent response rate).

*The Accreditation of Chemotherapy Nurses and NSW Cancer Workforce Plan and the Cancer Nursing in NSW initiatives were excluded from the evaluation as they were in development stage at the time of review.

Results

Program participants reported:

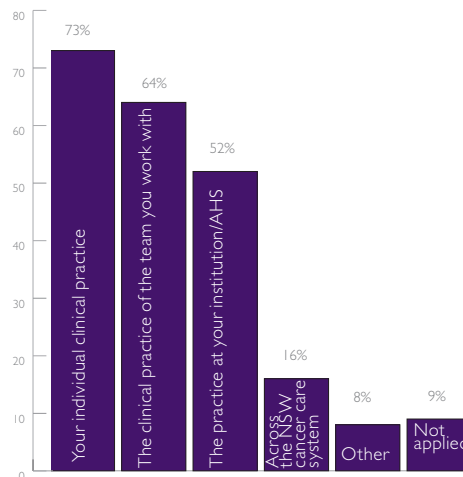
- acquisition of new skills and techniques
- application of new evidence into daily practice
- a shift into leadership roles within their professions
- influence of team practice improvement.

The evaluation further identified a stakeholder perception that the competitive grants structure favoured medical professionals and those with more grant experience in larger teaching and research centres.

This was contradicted by the data, which showed that nurses and allied health professionals represented over 90 per cent of Education Scholarships, Travel and International Sabbatical Grants.

The analysis did identify low rural uptake of the initiatives, however this number reflects the distribution of patients and cancer treatment services across NSW.

Application of new skills by level of change



A total of \$11,601,448 has been spent on Program initiatives, supporting 410 professional development opportunities.

- Academic Chairs Program
- Basic Sciences in Oncology Course
- Clinical Fellowship Program
- Clinical Research Grants
- Education Scholarships Program
- International Sabbatical Program
- NSW Registrar Advanced Trainee Program
- Psycho-oncology Clinical Fellowship Program
- Rural Nurse Education Program
- Strategic Leadership Program
- Travel Grants Program

Participants in individual initiatives such as Clinical Fellowships, Clinical Research Grants and International Sabbaticals reported some success in influencing improvements across teams, organisations and even the system. However, individual cancer care professionals have limited capacity to effect organisational or system change.

Conclusion

Overall, the initiatives have had a positive impact on enhancing the capacity of individual cancer care professionals in NSW.