
CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

A study of healthcare providers' perceptions and experiences of integrated care

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Introduction: Children and young people with chronic and complex conditions are more likely to experience fragmented care due to the complexity of their conditions, their high healthcare utilisation, and the multitude of health and social care providers involved. Integrating care for these children and young people presents many challenges. There is limited literature that explores the experiences of healthcare providers who try to deliver integrated care to children with chronic and complex conditions, and this research aims to address this gap. It describes some of the barriers and enablers to delivering integrated care by exploring the experiences and perspectives of six healthcare providers.

Methods: This research used qualitative semi-structured in-depth interviews to explore the experiences of two hospital-based nurses, two hospital-based allied health professionals, a hospital-based general paediatrician and a community-based general practitioner. An Interpretive Phenomenological Analysis method was used to guide the interview schedule, drive the analysis and interpretation of the findings. All interviews followed a semi-structured interview schedule and were audio-recorded, transcribed verbatim and thematically analysed.

Results: The six superordinate themes derived from this research were:

- Traditional models of care
- Embracing child and family centred care
- Care coordination
- Communication
- Interprofessional practice
- Organisational influences

The participants described that the dominant model of care within the hospital remains a traditional medical model of care. The organisational culture and influences (systems and structures) were described as major barriers to providing integrated care. Care coordination, timely and consistent communication and interprofessional practice were all highlighted as opportunities to shift towards integrated child and family centred care. The superordinate themes had many overlaps and dependencies on each other.

Discussions: This research has provided valuable insights into the experiences of healthcare delivery in a large, state-wide tertiary paediatric centre. These insights will contribute to service planning and delivery and will have a direct effect on quality improvement processes.

Conclusions: A child and family centred approach, improved communication, and role clarity amongst healthcare providers could lead to better integrated care provision in a paediatric tertiary hospital. Interprofessional education and training, allocation of additional time for care coordination and communication, strong leadership (including executive and peer leadership), change champions, and streamlining of systems and processes are all required to shift the culture within the tertiary hospital. Organisational structures also need to be addressed to support the implementation of evidence-informed integrated care.

Lessons learned: Implementation of quality improvement activities as identified by the findings of this research needs to be scaffolded by organisational structures.

Limitations: The low sample size and research within a single institution limits generalisability of these findings.

Suggestions for future research: This research forms phase one of a larger research project which explores children, young people and their parents' experiences of integrated care. In this mixed-methods research the perspectives of children, parents/carers and healthcare providers will be triangulated. The findings of this research will help to improve integrated healthcare service delivery, patient experiences and outcomes, as well as inform service providers about the effect use of healthcare resources.