
CONFERENCE ABSTRACT

A Tale of Four Cities: Analysis of mental health services across four metropolitan Australian cities using the Integrated Atlas of Mental Health

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Introduction: Understanding the availability, capacity and accessibility of services in a geographically defined region for any given health need or condition is imperative for sound policy and service planning. Between the second half of 2014 and early 2018, systematic mapping of the mental health needs and services was undertaken in nine largely urban Primary Health Care regions using the Integrated Atlas for Mental Health. These nine regions were located in covered almost the entire greater Sydney region, over 65% of the greater Melbourne region, all of Perth and the north Brisbane region.

Method: Service provision was analysed using the DESDE-LTC system for long-term care service description and classification that allows international comparison. Rates per 100,000 inhabitants were calculated to compare the care availability and placement capacity for children and adolescents, adults and older adults. Up to 15 population risk factors related to mental health, health status and mortality indicators were analysed for each region to highlight areas of higher need. Results were analysed along with the use of geo-spatial maps.

Results: While the analysis shows only a small degree of variation in the availability of hospital based acute care, there are significant differences in the availability of other forms of residential services, particularly non-hospital forms. Low intensity outpatient social care services are also a dominant feature with few services related to employment or structured rehabilitation. High growth corridors in all outer metropolitan regions showed higher levels of risk for mental health and have significantly fewer services.

Conclusions: Across Australia, different terms are used to describe mental health services, particularly in relation to different forms of residential care and outpatient services. The use of the Integrated Atlas methodology enables a clear and comprehensive understanding of the spectrum of services, the relative capacity of those services for a region, their location, the needs of the population and the ability to identify gaps. The Atlas data also provides a basis for better understanding mental health outcomes.

This presentation will provide an analysis of the findings from the Atlas mapping in four different PHN urban regions and raise issues of equity of access to mental health care in Australia.

Lessons Learned: Significant structural reforms with the implementation of the National Disability Insurance Scheme and changes to funding for community mental health organisations is impacting

on the stability of mental health services. As these changes roll out, analysis of services and population needs is required to ensure closer alignment.

Limitations: Only universal access specialised services for adults and children have been studied.

Suggestions for future research: Analysis of relative technical efficiency, geographical accessibility and workforce capacity.