Conference Abstract

People with disabilities and professionals' views on access to health services in Western Sydney

Gisselle Gallego, Centre for Health Research, School of Medicine, University of Western Sydney, Australia;

Amy Dryden, Centre for Health Research, School of Medicine, University of Western Sydney, Australia

Angela Dew, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Sydney

Ana Fernandez, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Sydney

Luis Salvador-Carulla, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Sydney

Michelle Lincoln, Faculty of Health Sciences, University of Sydney

Correspondence to: Gisselle Gallego, University of Western Sydney, Australia, E-mail: g.gallego@uws.edu.au

Abstract

Background: One in five Australians have a disability with this number likely to grow, largely driven by increases in population and population ageing. Understanding the current barriers to people with physical disability accessing the health care system has important implications for health and public health.

Aim: To explore the experiences of people with physical disability and health care service providers of accessibility of health services in Western Sydney. In particular this research asks: What are the non-physical barriers experienced by people with physical impairments to accessing health care services in Western Sydney?

Methods: In order to sample a continuum of experiences, stratified purposive sampling was used to identify participants across the diverse populations of Western Sydney. In-depth semi-structured interviews and focus groups were conducted with people with disability and health care service providers (general practitioners, nurses, allied health). The interviews were digitally recorded and transcribed and analysed using a constant comparison method.

Results: To date seven people with disability and four service providers have participated in the study. People with disability described a number of non-physical barriers to accessing services in WS including: financial (cost of services), service (lack of protocols to treat people with disability, waiting list, number of service providers in the area) and information (access to, information about disability appropriate health services, rules about health entitlements). They also described complex social needs that have a significant impact on their health (employment, housing, timely access to equipment); which are not always considered by health care service providers. Some describe how they feel "invisible" - from the high counters at general practices and hospitals to the

back door they use to enter a dentist office. Participants also highlighted the lack of disability awareness training of service providers – "Not used to working with people with disability". Service providers also reported that clinicians and support staff require more education about disability. While service providers perceive they were compassionate and caring when providing care to people with disability. In contrast people with disability reported a lack of compassion and understanding from some health care service providers.

Conclusion: The preliminary results of this study highlight the importance of "disability awareness" by service providers and support staff. There is also a need to address the social and economic barriers to access health services experienced by people with disability. It is important to improve the effectiveness of and determine in what ways the person, the service provider, and the policies of service delivery systems share responsibility for access to health and health care (accountability).

Keywords

access; disability; western sydney

PowerPoint presentation

https://www.conftool.net/integratedcare2014/index.php?page=downloadPaper&form_id=202