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Credentialing Occupational Therapists to meet specific Clinical Environments.

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Credentialing Occupational Therapists to meet specific Clinical Environments.

A three year credentialing project began with the question: how does an occupational therapy manager know that any new staff member regardless of their previous clinical experience is competent in their specific clinical environment ?

The credentialing project that was developed, evaluated and implemented through a collaboration of senior clinical OT and managers from 4 major health services in Melbourne, Australia has been adopted by other Australian health services. Through informing our international colleagues of this programme, that has been developed by OT's for OT's, it may meet their service development needs as well.

The framework used to develop the competencies and the credentialing of the competencies will be outlined, as well as the literature that influenced the project. The three starting competencies were Initial Assessment, Equipment Prescription and Home assessment. Ensuring that clinical reasoning was the central point in the credentialing process for each of these 3 competencies will be explained. The responsibility of this programme remains with the OT clinical leaders and supports the orientation and professional development processes.

The project was initially aimed for the acute health field, which occurs in large state government funded hospitals where the average length of stay is 5.82 days. The adaptability of this programme to another field of occupational therapy and the additional competencies developed will also be elaborated.

The credentialing programme that has been active for over 12 months, following 2 evaluations has proved to be a tool that can demonstrate to key stakeholders, like funders of services or families of patients that the occupational therapy staff are competent in key areas of service delivery. The programme has already been used effectively in a complex family complaint related to service provision.

This programme has been strongly accepted by occupational therapy staff as they welcome the opportunity to gain objective feedback that confirms that their service provision in key areas of occupational therapy is relevant and current to their specific clinical environment.