

Nurturing New Talent: The Role of Mentoring Programs in Allied Health Professions Transition to Workforce



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BACKGROUND

- Interprofessional practice has increased in healthcare following the World Health Organisation's Framework for Action on Interprofessional Education and Collaborative Practice (World Health Organisation, 2010).
- Allied Health Professionals (AHPs) play a crucial role in patient care, and contemporary healthcare structures warrant skill development for interprofessional practice amongst this cohort (Jones et al., 2022).
- Mentoring and support programs are essential to support psychosocial and professional growth of early career healthcare practitioners (Lait et al., 2011; Sooful, Williams & Moore, 2020).
- The Southern Adelaide Local Health Network (SALHN) offers an early career mentoring program for AHPs.
- The impact of this program on AHPs transition into the workforce was not well understood.

OBJECTIVES

1. Explore program participants' experiences of the program in supporting professional growth and psychosocial outcomes during their transition into the workforce.
2. Use the Communities of Practice social learning theory as a lens to discuss program strengths and areas for future improvement.

METHODS

Study design

- Exploratory qualitative pilot study.
- Ethics obtained through Southern Adelaide Human Research Committee (Project ID: 137.24), cross-institutional approval obtained from the Flinders University Human Research Ethics Committee (Project ID: 7716).

Participants

- Purposive sampling to recruit 2023 and 2024 early career program participants employed within SALHN.
- Early career program participants included AHPs from Social Work (n=10), Physiotherapy (n=9), Occupational therapy (n=8), Dietetics (n=5), Podiatry (n=3), Speech Pathology (n=2).

Methodology

- Interpretative phenomenology to explore participant experiences.

Study procedures

Data collection

1. Interviews



- Online, twenty-minute, semi-structured individual interviews post program participation.
- Themed to explore interviewees experiences of the early career program.
- Recorded and transcribed using Microsoft Teams™.

2. Questionnaires



- Online questionnaires offered flexibility and anonymity.
- Responses themed to explore respondent experiences of the early career program.

3. Observation



- Naturalistic, overt non-participant observation of two program sessions.
- Included notetaking for thematic analysis.

Data Analysis

- Thematic analysis of transcripts, responses and observation notes via NVivo™.
- Inductive coding was followed by deductive coding.
- Codes grouped and refined in relation to the Communities of Practice key concepts.
- Themes and codes were continuously reviewed by the research team.

RESULTS

Respondents

- Eleven program participants responded to the questionnaire.
- Six participated in a semi-structured interview.

Themes

- Five themes (Figure 1) were generated with associated subthemes.

Theme 1: Sense of community

Describes a culture of belonging, fostered through shared experience and support. All interviewees shared the challenges of transitioning from student to professional, and some felt validated and reassured by commonality.

"I guess the sense of community as well...knowing lots of people are there to support you...going through the same thing."

Theme 2: Learning with, from, and about each other

Members shared knowledge and learnings and developed a better understanding of each other's roles to improve shared practices, such as referral and discharge pathways.

"...I'm much better now at discharge planning partially because I've learned from my colleagues in the multidisciplinary team what options there are, what things are suitable for patients."

Theme 3: Wellbeing and stress management

The program provided an environment for participants to manage workload burden, reflect on learnings, and identify the transferrable skills they hold for various career pathways.

"...it provided a really structured way to be able to step back from being clinically busy...they've been a really nice space to sort of like, have a bit of a reprieve from clinical work."

Theme 4: Navigating the workplace

The program enabled participants to navigate the workplace. Introduction to employee entitlements and the hospital structure was identified as beneficial.

"[it was beneficial to] understand the hospital structure, the programs in place, the things I could access. In the case of HR, the things I can't access."

Theme 5: Program quality improvement

The program had limitations, such as limited opportunity for practical activities and interprofessional interaction, and the timing of sessions. Findings helped to identify ways to improve outcomes for future participants.

"...if it was more of a collaborative kind of thing, and you're working with the people that you're sitting with, next to, could potentially have been a little bit more beneficial..."

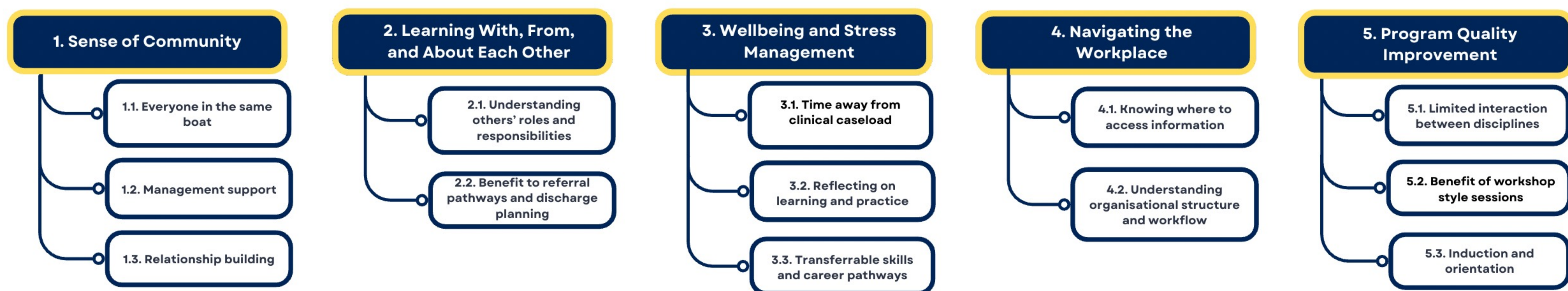


Figure 1: Main themes and subthemes identified from data analysis

CONCLUSIONS

- Findings demonstrate that workplace commitment to supporting early career AHPs' transition to workforce through an interprofessional mentoring program contributed to the professional growth and wellbeing of the participants.
- Using the Communities of Practice theory as a lens to explore program design and participant experiences, findings prompt program review and improvements, such as designing the sessions against interprofessional practice competencies and promoting collaborative workshop style sessions.

References:

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