

Perceived barriers and facilitators to accessing effective clinical supervision and implementation of a clinical supervision exchange program in the Australian alcohol and other drugs (AOD) sector

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Background

The Australian AOD workforce

- Recruitment and retention difficulties, high rates of stress and burnout, complex client cases
- Limited professional development opportunities and a need for increased skill development

Clinical supervision among AOD workers

- Shown to reduce burnout, increase organisational commitment and protect against turnover
- Less than a quarter of Australian AOD workers receive external individual clinical supervision

A clinical supervision exchange program

- Proposed as a strategy to increase access to external AOD clinical supervision

Aims

1. Identify perceived barriers and facilitators to accessing effective clinical supervision among AOD workers; and
2. Identify perceived barriers and facilitators to effective implementation of a clinical supervision exchange program in the AOD sector.

Methods

Staff from AOD treatment services in Brisbane were invited to participate in semi-structured qualitative interviews which asked about their:

- experiences of receiving and providing clinical supervision;
- perceptions of barriers and facilitators to receiving and providing high quality clinical supervision in the AOD sector; and
- views on implementation of a clinical supervision exchange program in the Australian AOD sector.

Data were thematically analysed using Braun and Clarke's six-step procedure (2006).

Results

Participants

- 21 participants (10 frontline and 11 senior management staff)
- One government and seven non-government AOD treatment services
- Professional backgrounds in counselling, social work and psychology
- Median of 11 years' experience working in the AOD sector (ranging from 3 months to 30 years)
- Mixed experience of receiving and providing clinical supervision

Results

Theme 1: A need for AOD-specific clinical supervision

Worker burnout

- Trauma exposure
- Heavy workloads
- Lived experience
- Isolation

AOD treatment is a specialist field

- Unique and varied treatment objectives
- Societal expectations
- Stigma and discrimination
- Multiple and complex client needs

Results

Theme 2: Preferences for the delivery of clinical supervision

Conceptual factors

- Safe space
- Educative and supportive

Operational factors

- All AOD workers receive clinical supervision
- Regular and frequent
- Supervisors and supervisees are trained
- Structured sessions
- Consistent

Results

Theme 3: Benefits of clinical supervision

For the worker

- Reduces burnout
- Increases confidence
- Identifies worker issues
- Improves the therapeutic alliance
- Supports skill development
- Navigating complex client issues
- Facilitates critical reflection
- Validation

For the sector

- Improves quality of care
- Reduces turnover

Results

Theme 4: Barriers and facilitators to access

Logistics

- Financial cost
- Limited time
- Limited availability of skilled AOD-specific supervisors

Matching

- Experience
- Professional background
- Trust and rapport
- Philosophical paradigm
- Expertise/interest
- Cultural background

Delivery format

- Individual/group
- Internal/external

Results

Theme 5: Perceptions of a clinical supervision exchange

- Increase access to external clinical supervision
- Expose workers to a greater diversity of perspectives
- Low monetary cost
- Increases sector collaboration
- Increases perceived value of clinical supervision

Results

Theme 6: Potential barriers and facilitators to effective implementation

- Matching
- Competitive tendering process
- Confidentiality
- Flexible delivery mode
- Additional time cost
- Training
- Governance
- Value of clinical supervision
- Sustainability

Summary of Findings

- Limited time, cost, availability of skilled AOD-specific supervisors, supervisor-supervisee matching and delivery format are perceived to be primary barriers to accessing effective clinical supervision among AOD workers
- A clinical supervision exchange program is perceived to be a potentially resource-effective strategy to increase access to external, individual clinical supervision among the workforce

Implications

- Supports the identification and development of effective strategies to increase access to effective clinical supervision among AOD workers
- Informs future research:
 - Evaluating the feasibility and effectiveness of implementing a clinical supervision exchange program in the Australian AOD sector
 - Identifying perceived opportunities among policymakers and commissioners of services to support increased access to effective clinical supervision

Thank you

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