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Conference Abstract

A systems level approach to integrated care: four key functions

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Abstract:

Introduction: Integrated care is a critical element of health care reforms in Australia and worldwide. This study aimed to identify policy-related documents that targeted 'integration' or 'integrated care' to understand how governments across jurisdictions attempt to influence integration of health services at the policy level.

Methods: A literature review was undertaken using a range of electronic databases, websites and the grey literature. For each document (e.g., agreements, policy directives, position statements, briefs), the overall vision and key elements that influenced integration were identified; and documents were organised into one of four key functions (WHO health system performance framework): stewardship; creating resources; financing and incentives; and delivering services.

Results: Over 100 relevant health policy-related documents were identified that articulated integrated care as a key aim. While policies across most jurisdictions were aligned with Australian health reform priority areas, context also influenced the approaches used, particularly in regional and remote locations.

Discussion: System-level integration enables implementation of reform, collaboration, consistency, and clear objectives, measures and targets; yet it also leads to variability in approaches to reform across jurisdictions. Opportunities for improved care pathways and shared resources exist. However there are also challenges around differing definitions of integration, evaluating policy impact and determining funding responsibility for policy implementation.

Keywords

australia, policy, integrated care

Presentation available at <http://www.integratedcarefoundation.org/content/33-international-lessons-implementing-integrated-care-%E2%80%932>