

2nd Biennial Australian Implementation conference

Theme 1: Theories and models of implementation science

How do current theories and models from implementation science relate to the everyday realities of policy development and service delivery?

Transitioning to 'Evidence for Excellence in Care': Implementing Evidence Based Practice in NSW Ambulance

Ambulance services provide critical medical and transport services to many of the sickest members of our community. Despite the importance of this role, the use of evidence based practice in the formulation of clinical policies is a new development in paramedicine. NSW Ambulance has embraced a systematic evidence based approach to clinical policy decision-making.

Traditionally, ambulance services have relied on a Medical Director to inform clinical policy. There have been a number of changes that have impacted on the ability of this model to adequately inform safe and efficacious care, including substantial increases in: the number of interventions (devices, procedures and drugs) available to paramedics; the amount of research completed in the prehospital environment; expectations of community members regarding the quality and quantity of care patients receive; and, the nature of paramedic education, with the introduction and embedding of tertiary qualifications into standard paramedic training. As a result of these changes, a model has been developed by NSW Ambulance researchers that utilises academic, grey and expert evidence to inform clinical policy decision-making practices.

This presentation outlines the model of evidence based practice used in NSW Ambulance, highlighting the influence of existing models on the development of the process and identifying the interactions between acknowledged organisational complexities and model development.

Case examples are used to highlight the tension between the ideals of the NSW Ambulance model and the 'realities' experienced when implementing clinical policies in an organisation which routinely deals with high risk medical situations. The presentation will conclude with a discussion of our ongoing processes to harness the expertise of paramedics in decision-making practices, including the establishment of an evidence review network and ongoing staff capacity building.