

**Abstract Title: 'Research into practice – lessons from a network approach to the challenge of implementation' (Theme 4: Building Capacity for effective implementation)**

Applying research findings to practice has more challenges than you would expect or hope for. How does the community managed sector respond to the challenge of implementing evidence based practice? Developing key partnerships and working through cross - sector collaboration is one such response.

This presentation will highlight key results and emerging issues from the initial three years of activities of the Community Mental Health Drug and Alcohol Research Network (CMHDARN).

CMHDARN aims to broaden involvement of the NSW community mental health and drug and alcohol (MHDA) sectors in research, and in particular, to facilitate the application of research findings to improve the effectiveness of service delivery models and practice.

By focussing on two community managed sectors - drug and alcohol (DA) and mental health (MH) - CMHDARN seeks to influence not only organisational engagement with implementation science, but also to enhance intersectoral understanding of coexisting issues and the capacity to deliver more effective services.

Beyond its commitment to evidence- based, best practice research, a capacity building approach underpins CMHDARN - one such approach offered by Cooke (2005) puts forward a framework of research capacity building that includes six principles:

1. building skills and confidence,
2. developing linkages and partnerships,
3. ensuring the research is 'close to practice',
4. developing appropriate dissemination,
5. investments in infrastructure,
6. building elements of sustainability and continuity.

With the potential to influence three hundred member services across NSW, CMHDARN strives to apply these principles in all aspects of the planning and implementation of its operations. Through the employment of a dedicated Research Network Project Officer, a quality program of research- related diverse activities is facilitated. Some examples of CMHDARN activities include: research forums, a research seeding grants program, reflective practice webinars, e-newsletters, a community research mentoring project and a website. CMHDARN has woven implementation science through this program of activities as a means of introducing related language, concepts and practice to drug and alcohol and mental health sector workers.

Evaluation results from some of those activities indicate that organisational and worker capacity building measures are effective and can positively influence service delivery models and practice. An independent evaluation of the 2012-13 CMHDARN Research Seeding Grants Program found that this program resulted in valuable organisational capacity building, actual changes in worker practice and service delivery, and effective relationships with academic research partners.

**References**

Cooke (2005) *A framework to evaluate research capacity building in health care*, in **BMC Family Practice 2005**, 6:44

Green, Lawrence *Implementation Research and Practice: If We Want More Evidence-Based Practice, We Need More Practice-Based Evidence*. Presentation, **First Biennial Implementation Conference Melbourne**. October 2012

