What do we really know about best-practice allied health professional supervision?

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Aims: The Allied Health Education and Training Department at the Cunningham Centre, Queensland Health sought to synthesise the best available evidence on the experiences and effects of professional supervision across the allied health disciplines (16 disciplines identified for the purposes of this review). Published and unpublished literature on the experience and effects of participating in supervision on allied health practitioner practice, service delivery and client outcomes is currently being reviewed, with a specific focus on geographically or professionally isolated practitioners.

**Method:** A multidisciplinary working group was formed in early 2011 to develop a focused research question and parameters for the review. In order to determine the current evidence on the experience and effects of professional supervision for allied health, a systematic review methodology, including both qualitative and quantitative literature, was chosen. A systematic review protocol was accepted for publication by the Joanna Briggs Institute in late 2011 with the comprehensive review due for completion in late 2012. A standardised keyword search of published and unpublished literature across 15 databases (including Medline, CINAHL, Psycinfo) as well as Dissertation Abstracts International and reference lists is currently under way. Once complete, standardised critical appraisal instruments from the Joanna Briggs Institute System for the Unified Management, Assessment and Review of Information package (JBI-SUMARI) will be used to assess methodological validity prior to inclusion in the review.

**Results:** The challenges and rewards of embarking on a systematic review will be shared during this presentation. Preliminary findings from the early stages of review completion will also be shared. Key findings include:

- a scarcity of high-quality supervision literature for allied health professionals, particularly in rural and remote settings
- an ever-increasing body of literature discussing the experiences and applicability of supervision across different disciplines
- one rigorous randomised control trial (in a metropolitan setting) demonstrating a clinically significant effect of face-to-face supervision of psychologists on client outcomes
- controversy over the effectiveness of supervision across distance.

**Implications:** Potential implications for professional supervision in rural and remote allied health services based on current evidence will be discussed.