

A method of assessment of the organisational structures and activities of clinical networks

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Background

BACKGROUND

GMCT Clinical Networks are a voluntary group of health professionals from a range of disciplines who aim to improve clinical care and service delivery.

- **Collegial approach** who agree on implementation of strategies
- **Disseminate knowledge** about evidence-based care
- Promising mechanism to get **research into practice**
- Increasingly used to implement **evidenced based policy into clinical care**
- Identify areas for **policy development and resource efficiencies**

This study is the first in a broader program of research to understand the determinants of effective networks.

Study Design & Aims

DESIGN

Retrospective descriptive study of 19 clinical networks using document review between 1 January 2006 – 31 December 2008.

AIMS

1. To describe the work of 19 GMCT Clinical Networks for a three-year period (2006-2008) in the following areas:
 - a) **network activities;**
 - b) membership participation; and,
 - c) associated direct costs.

Research Questions

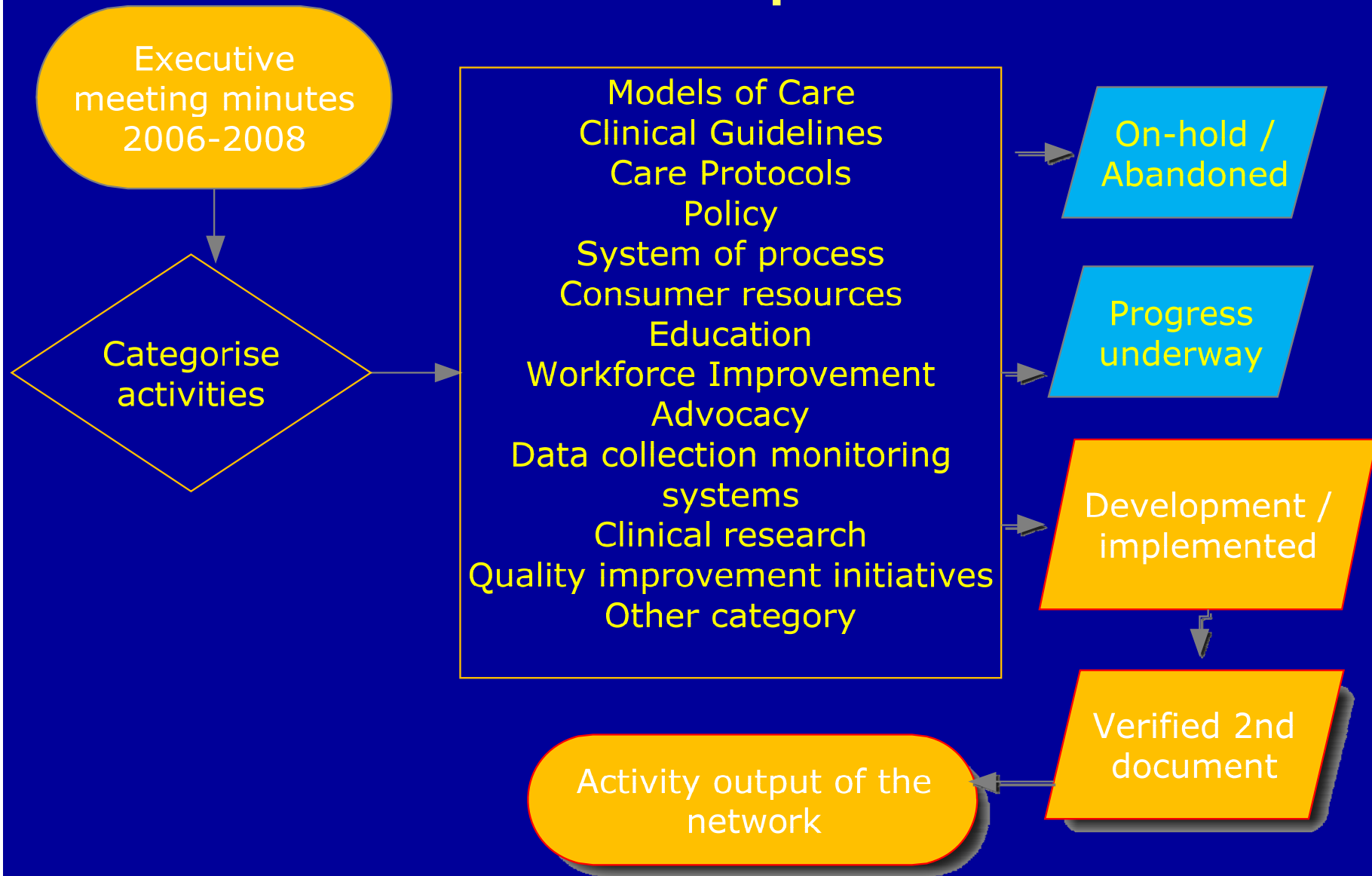
RESEARCH QUESTIONS

- What activities / outputs have the networks developed or implemented?
- How can we reliably determine the output of a network?

PROCEDURE

- Combination of clinical audit & content analysis
- Activities categorised into pre-determined classifications allowing for new categories to emerge.

Method of document review – assessing activity output



Renal Services Network output examples

Care Protocols

- Health facility guidelines for renal dialysis units

Policy development

- Prevention of chronic kidney disease in NSW action plan
- NSW renal plan
- NSW population health taskforce draft work plan
- Home dialysis

System or process

- Water standards for dialysis machines
- Live kidney donor transplants
- Highly sensitised patient support
- Tissue typing service
- LifeGift position
- NSW Renal purchasing strategy

Validity and reliability

- Meeting dates are cross referenced for completeness
- Coding classifications checked by network leaders against activity
- Secondary supporting documents are sighted as corroborating evidence
- 2nd researcher will audit 20% for completeness and accuracy

Future policy implications

Clinical networks provide an important mechanism for consumer, clinician and policy-makers when making policy and planning decisions.

- This method of analysis promises to reliably determine outputs of these diverse networks, their costs and, in future studies, their impact.
- The method may be transferable to other health policy studies when examining the impact of health service innovation.