

## **Geographic variations in Australian drug and alcohol services influence the implementation of the Pathways to Comorbidity Care (PCC) program**

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**Introduction and Aims:** Comorbid drug and alcohol and mental health disorders are highly prevalent. Significant gaps in service provision make this problem particularly difficult to address in regional Australia. The Pathways to Comorbidity Care (PCC) program (1) was designed to improve management of comorbid mental disorders outpatient drug and alcohol clinicians in New South Wales, Australia. We used the Consolidated Framework for Implementation Research (CFIR) to provide a conceptual basis for evaluating variations in implementation outcomes within and between geographically diverse services.

**Design and Methods:** Clinicians across three drug and alcohol services from metropolitan, outer metropolitan and regional geographic locations were engaged at multiple levels of influence (directors, managers, clinicians) during the implementation of the PCC training package for comorbidity. The CFIR guided the evaluation of PCC implementation,.

**Results:** Regional clinicians identified more barriers than metropolitan clinicians on several Intervention Characteristics (adaptability, complexity, design quality and packaging), as well as Outer Setting (peer pressure), Inner Setting (implementation climate, staff incentives, leadership engagement, available resources) and Process (planning, opinion leaders, executing) domains. The Characteristics of Individuals domain revealed slight differences in the range of facilitators reported. The only construct evaluated more favourably by rural clinicians was networks and communications.

**Discussions and Conclusions:** Specific barriers identified more strongly by regional clinicians included the importance of communication with local clinicians and leadership about the adaptability of the approach, any necessary resources required, and the inclusion of relevant incentives. Metropolitan clinicians provided more favourable evaluations of the approach, package design, implementation climate and certain implementation processes.

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