Integrated Multi-Professional Teams in Primary Care: Rhetoric or Reality?

Authors: Julie Hepworth & John Marley
Contact: Julie.Hepworth@qut.edu.au

What is the Problem

- Integrated multi-professional care is crucial in many countries’ policies to improve health outcomes and patient satisfaction.
- It is widely acknowledged that developing integrated team-based care is challenging, and often absent is the explicit consideration of the human dynamics, making team-based care more rhetoric than reality.
- Based on current evidence obtained through a systematic narrative review, conceptual analysis, and clinical experience of innovation team building, we identify the vital process through which health professionals become successful teams.

Challenges to Team Integration

- The cyclical nature of the change process – can cause teams to resort to old ways.
- Lack of recognition of the stage within which a team is operating – disjointed development.
- Characteristics and dynamics of human relationships – involving power and ‘turf wars’.

Strategies for Developing Integrated Teams

- Identify team composition, leadership, decision-making processes, and goals
- Plan how existing work intersects with changing clinical practices and roles
- Establish timeframes for measuring outcomes
- Draw on and enlist new support mechanisms to work with and maintain changes
- Develop mechanism for monitoring and feedback
- Consider the impact of organisational physical space on team practice
- Build and maintain trust among team members
- Develop team’s shared ownership of new working practices
- Keep team focus outward looking