**Establishing trans-professional health care competencies for effectively supporting people who are vulnerable and experience disadvantage or marginalisation**

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Professional education focused on working with vulnerable and marginalised communities is critical to achieving equitable health care and should be a core competency in the education of all health professionals. However, conventional medical, nursing, and allied health curricula may not fully address the contemporaneous needs of vulnerable and marginalised clients. Further compounding the issue is the myriad of competency frameworks developed by single professions “in silo”, against a paucity of core competencies that are transferrable across professions and settings. Clearly-defined transferable, graduate competencies for emerging health professionals are needed to effectively prepare the emerging health workforce to plan and deliver essential services to support people who are most in need of appropriate care.

Poorer health outcomes are evident for people who usually have a number of complex needs such as those who are vulnerable, and experience disadvantage and/ or marginalisation. Disadvantaged and marginalised groups include, but are not limited to, children and youth, Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples, LGBTIQ+, refugees and asylum seekers, migrants, people from culturally and linguistically diverse (CALD) backgrounds, older persons, people living with disability or mental illness, rural and remote communities, people from low socioeconomic groups, who are socially isolated, homeless, experienced family violence. Sub-optimal care and delayed intervention can exacerbate client problems, increase costs to the health system, and place undue burden on individuals, families and communities. To improve health outcomes for these population groups, national agreement and implementation of core, transferable skills that facilitate effective collaboration with these individuals, families and communities, are therefore critical.

We are planning a study using a modified Delphi technique with key stakeholders to:

1. define the core, transferrable health workforce competencies that facilitate effective engagement with vulnerable people who experience disadvantage and marginalisation, and
2. design and validate a trans-professional, competency-based framework for educating and preparing the emerging health workforce to work effectively with a range of vulnerable populations who experience disadvantage and marginalisation.

Based on our prior and current work, potential trans-professional competencies may encompass:

* skills in assessing the nature and degree of vulnerability, functional consequence of vulnerability, and co-existing needs of individuals, families and communities
* using person-centred and family-centred approaches to communicate, collaborate and partner with vulnerable individuals who experience disadvantage and/or marginalisation
* holistically viewing the needs of an individual and/or their family and community, using a biopsychosocial approach (e.g. International Classification of Functioning Disability and Health) to understand, describe and communicate about individual, social and environmental factors that influence health outcomes
* working within strengths-based, person-centred and solution-focussed frameworks that promote empowerment and capacity building
* working effectively within multidisciplinary, interdisciplinary, and/or transdisciplinary teams to facilitate efficient and effective care and enhance outcomes
* working in culturally sensitive, safe and responsive ways
* acting with integrity, honesty and transparency
* managing legal and ethical requirements.

If you or someone you know is interested to know more about this study, please contact Dr David Lim, at [david.lim@westernsydney.edu.au](mailto:david.lim@westernsydney.edu.au).