

COORDINATION OF CARE WITHIN PRIMARY HEALTH CARE AND WITH OTHER SECTORS: A SYSTEMATIC REVIEW

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POLICY CONTEXT

As the population ages and the rate of chronic disease increases, more people are receiving complex regimes of care, from a variety of health care providers. This care must be well coordinated if people with complex needs are to receive care that is comprehensive and continuous, and if they are to take an active role in their care. The need to coordinate care is one of the drivers for health service integration.

KEY FINDINGS

Types of strategy found in the experimental studies reviewed:

The review identified three main types of strategies around **communication and support** to providers related to coordination of care:

- communication between service providers, including case conferences
- support for service providers, including supervision, joint training, reminders and liaison staff to facilitate communication
- support for patients, including joint education, reminders and assistance in accessing primary health care services

Three more strategies related to providing systematic **support for coordinating care:**

- arrangements for coordinating clinical activities, including joint assessments and agreed schedules of service provision and facilitated access to other services
- structuring relationships between service providers, including co-location, multi-disciplinary team care, case management and assigning a patient to a particular service provider
- systems for supporting coordination of care, including information systems, shared records, pro formas, shared care plans and shared decision support

Effectiveness

- Most studies reported positive health outcomes – these were most common in those linking Primary Health Care (PHC) and specialists or residential aged care and least common in those linking PHC and hospitals
- Studies using strategies that provide systematic support were generally more successful in achieving health outcomes than those involving communication and individual support
- Studies that used communication and individual support were generally more successful in achieving patient satisfaction

Opportunities for investing in arrangements to improve coordination of care in Australia are consistent with these findings include:

- better systems for linking care, including shared clinical and health service information systems and decision support
- stronger networks of service providers
- greater capacity within general practices for multi-disciplinary care within the practice and with other services
- clearer relationships between patients with complex care needs and their primary care providers
- more co-location of services, with systems to support coordination of care

For more details, go to the [three page report](#)

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