

Population Health Planning: The VHA/Monash University Population Health Research Project

Dr. Nikos Thomacos
Department of Health Science

Rationale

- The VHA/Monash University Population Health Project is an initiative that aims to enhance individuals' and organisations/agencies' population health-related knowledge and skills
- The project's hypothesis is that a range of assumptions exist within health policy frameworks that don't align with the actual skill mix, understandings, and thus practices of the health sector as a whole
- As such, investigation is required regarding the congruence among stated policy positions, best-practice and the workforce's understanding of what constitutes a population health-focused approach to service delivery planning, delivery, and evaluation

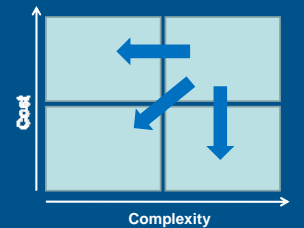
Rationale

- To this end, the aim of the Project is to research and identify specific capacity building interventions that would support the development of the health workforce to successfully undertake and utilise population health-focussed approaches
- Other outcomes include an exploration of the connection between 'good' planning and governance, the articulation of the competencies that underpin 'good' planning, and the examination of how 'good' planning is and could be better incorporated into existing accreditation programs.

The challenge

Planning and delivering services in a way that:

- Ensures that service users are in appropriate part of the service system at the right time
- Maximises movement from more expensive to less expensive services and interventions, including health promotion and early intervention
- Recognises that the health sector is diverse, and yet one of a number of sectors involved in the provision of services
- Enables collaboration and cooperation among health care professionals
- Is grounded in a social model of health



Incorporating & contextualising planning

- In order to achieve these objectives, it is important to incorporate 'better' planning processes and contextualise planning's role within a governance framework
- In this way, not only do clinical and financial imperatives inform the planning process, the planning process itself informs both financial and clinical decision making



Project stages

- A literature review and document analysis regarding best-practice and thinking about the use of population health approaches
- Consultations with stakeholder and key informants
- A workshop to explore and discuss the findings and development options with the VHA Population Health and Area-based Planning (PHAP) Working Group, and develop a research and implementation strategy to address the needs identified
- The development of a proposal to be used in applying for additional grants monies (i.e. ARC Linkage Grants, etc) to realise the proposed research and implementation strategy

The seven key themes identified

- Health care systems
- Models of health
- Health as a continuum
- Data and measures
- Place, community & society
- Non-health determinants
- Education, training & development



Source: Thomas, N. et al. (2008). Population health planning: A model of best practice – in preparation

Conclusions so far...

- To date, no systematic review has considered all of these themes concurrently, but all are important
- That said, a range of different models exist that bring a number of these themes together e.g. Wagner's Chronic Care Model (U.S.A.), Population Care Management Model (U.K.), Population Health Template (Canada), etc.
- Effective planning requires an ability to attend to both broad and specific health needs alongside meaningful and consistent policy and decision making frameworks
- Good population planning processes and outcomes are an integral part of accreditation
- Planning processes and outcomes need to be considered part of good governance



An example of *one* of the current approaches – extending the Chronic Care Model

- Wagner et al's. (1996) is now a well established and utilised framework
- Has been used to guide the planning, delivery and evaluation of chronic care services
- Problematic though, as does not readily incorporate things such as health promotion and non-health determinants



Source: Wagner, E. H., Austin, B. T., & Koiff, M. V. (1996). Organizing care for patients with chronic illness. *The Milbank Quarterly*, 74(4), 511-544.

The Extended Chronic Care Model

- Has been developed by Barr and her colleagues (2002) to address some of the original model's shortcomings
- Used in B.C to inform service delivery planning, delivery, and evaluation
- Incorporates service delivery partnerships, policy development, and non-health determinants



Source: Barr et al. (2002). Available at http://www.health.gov.bc.ca/dcm/chronic_care_model.html

Public Health Planning in Los Angeles

- Restructuring of public health in Los Angeles County
- Why? Concluded that they were missing both the forest and the trees!
- The approach taken is built on a public health mission of safeguarding and improving the health of all residents, with a broadened focus to recognise the determinants of health
- Recognised that health promotion and preventative services as key components of the health care reform needed to deliver on the above aim
- Required significant training and development to avail the changes needed

Source: Fielding, J., Luck, J., & Tye, G. (2003). Reinvigorating public health core functions: Restructuring Los Angeles County's public health system. *Public Health Management Practice*, 9(1), 7-15.