

# Centre Projects

## **STREAMS OF CARE AND CLINICAL DIRECTORATES IN LARGE TEACHING HOSPITALS: EFFECTS AND IMPLICATIONS AND RELATIONSHIP TO ORGANISATIONAL PERFORMANCE**

**Investigators:** Jeffrey Braithwaite, Mary Westbrook and Rick Iedema

**Duration:** 1999 - 2005

**Description:** Current received wisdom about health sector restructuring suggests that streams of care should be designed and institutionalised. Conceived broadly, streams of care are clinical groupings with population health responsibilities for defined sets of patients with relatively homogeneous disease profiles. At this point in time, there are no retrospective or prospective studies nationally or internationally on this phenomena and none so far as we are aware that is in an advanced design phase. We contemplate in this project a thoroughgoing investigation into streams of care across time.

In the meantime however, there is ongoing Centre research into clinical directorates. In many respects, these are precursors to streams of care in that clinical directorates establish clinical streams for management purposes within hospitals whereas streams of care as currently envisaged represent clinical streams for management purposes across populations, i.e. across hospitals and in the community.

The Centre's program of work on clinical directorates can therefore shed empirical light on the streaming phenomenon and act as a platform for our future research programs into streams of care. Key findings from the clinical directorate studies include:

- Claimed benefits of clinical directorates such as improved efficiency are not realised in practice
- There is no association between teaching hospital efficiency and clinical directorate type
- Regardless of whether in any given year a teaching hospital is configured traditionally, in one of the two main clinical directorate types or involved in a major restructuring exercise from one of these models to another, there is no difference in performance efficiency.

## Centre Projects

This program of research is therefore important in its own right but it is also crucial as a precursor to a future program examining streams of care prospectively.

**Outputs:** Several papers are in press from the clinical directorate investigation. A range of presentations at conferences, workshops and symposia has been made. A future proposal to evaluate streams of care in real time and prospectively (formative and summative evaluation) is in train.

### Selected Publications

**Braithwaite J, Westbrook MT (2004).** A survey of staff attitudes and comparative managerial and non-managerial views in a clinical directorate. *Journal of Health Services Management Research*. Vol 17, pp.141-166.

**Braithwaite J, Westbrook MT (2005).** Rethinking clinical organisational structures: an attitude survey of doctors, nurses and allied health staff in clinical directorates. *Journal of Health Services Research and Policy*, Vol 10 (1), pp.10-17.