

Responding to rural needs: the evolving role of an allied health worker in traumatic brain injury paediatric rehabilitation coordination

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Aim

This poster will highlight the changing role of rehabilitation coordinators (RCs) in providing a service to paediatric clients who have had a traumatic brain injury (TBI) in the New England region of rural NSW. Children with TBI have limited access to allied health services in rural and remote Australia. Often allied health services in our rural area are understaffed, unsupported, and not specialised in TBI-related cognitive and social needs.

Method

A two-year review of documentation from team meetings and case conferences with families and schools, along with rehabilitation plans, was conducted to identify themes relating to the role of the rehabilitation coordinator. These themes were compared to current position descriptions and literature relating to the functions of rehabilitation coordinators.

Results

Some themes identified by the process showed that lack of services and specialised support has resulted in the RC's role evolving. This encompasses a higher level of support for key people in the child's environment. The evolution includes the RCs engaging in a deeper involvement in the implementation of cognitive and behavioural strategies at home and school. RCs foster a collaborative interagency approach that is flexible, innovative, goal directed and child oriented.

Conclusion

RCs have responded to gaps in rural services by extending their role to encompass a changing service delivery model. The review illuminated features of this response, which will have broad application to many health care settings where allied health services are lacking.

