ADDRESSING THE ALLIED HEALTH WORKFORCE DATA VOID:
North Carolina's Innovative Strategy to Confront the Challenge

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Association of Schools of Allied Health Professions Annual Meeting
Toronto, Ontario
October 23, 2003
Agenda

1. What Motivated this Project?
2. Project Goals and Products
3. Results and Outcomes
4. Challenges
5. How to Improve Workforce Planning Efforts
The Allied Health Workforce Assessment Projects

- Initially funded by the North Carolina Area Health Education Centers (NC AHEC) Program, now funded by the Duke Endowment

- An assessment of the current need and supply of selected Allied Health professions in North Carolina

- A collaboration among diverse allied health stakeholders including practitioners, educators and employers

Collaborative effort between:

- Council for Allied Health in North Carolina
- AHEC North Carolina Area Health Education Centers Program
- The Cecil G. Sheps Center for Health Services Research, University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill
What Motivated this Project?

- Pharmacists
- Allied health professions

**equilibrium**

Supply vs. Time graph
Supply Cycle

Ideal intervention point

Typical intervention point

Allied health professions
Project Goals

- Not only to identify if profession is currently facing a shortage…
- But is the profession likely to face a shortage in the future and what can we do now to prevent a shortage?
  - Are more educational programs needed? Do existing programs need to expand enrollments?
  - Does the geographic distribution of educational programs match the needs of the state?
  - Does the diversity/language abilities of the profession match that of North Carolina’s citizens?
  - How will new technologies change the demand for certain skills within the profession?
  - Are changes in licensure/certification requirements, scope of practice regulations or practice acts needed?
Supply Cycle

Allied health professions

Ideal intervention point

Typical intervention point
Completed Studies

Maintaining Balance: The Physical Therapy Workforce in North Carolina in the Year 2000

Communicating the Trends: The Speech-Language Pathology Workforce in North Carolina (2001)
Completed Studies


Scanning the Radiologic Sciences Workforce in North Carolina (2003)
Types of Recommendations from the Reports

- **Supply and Distribution**
  - Shortage or poor distribution

- **Education**
  - Number, type and location of programs
  - Recruitment/retention of students
  - Faculty recruitment/retention

- **Workforce Planning**
  - Collaboration between educators and employers
  - Planning regions

- **Diversity of the Workforce**
  - Gender, race, ethnicity and language abilities

- **Data Collection and Workforce Surveillance**
  - Development or improvement of databases
Results and Outcomes of the Reports:
Better Data for Planning

Data, recommendations and policy issues identified from the project have been used by:

- The UNC Board of Governors and the North Carolina Community College System
  - In educational program planning efforts and initiatives
- AHECs and Regional Workforce Planning Groups
  - In collaborative workforce planning initiatives involving educators, employers, local workforce development boards
  - For mid- to long-term educational and workforce planning
  - In efforts to show need and secure grant funding
Results and Outcomes of the Reports: Increased Communication

Project Uses Panel Process to Derive Recommendations

The Panel Process Fosters:

- Communication between diverse group of individuals representing educators, employers, practitioners, and various professional associations.
- Buy-in to recommendations because panel is representative of profession

Project provides objective information for discussions of difficult professional issues and has facilitated communication among disparate groups:

- Between competing HIM credentialing organizations about development of minimum educational qualifications
- Between SLP licensure board and school employers about differences in licensing requirements
Results and Outcomes of the Reports:
Increased Attention to Allied Health Workforce Issues

- Press
  - Brought exposure to the allied health professions
  - Featured in local, state and national publications (newspapers, magazines, newsletters)

- Technical Assistance
  - To other states and/or organizations to assess allied health trends
Implementation Challenges: The news is not always what the profession wants to hear

The professions are excited and anxious to have their allied health profession assessed but they may have difficulty:

- Accepting/Believing the Data
  - May contradict widely held opinions (i.e. 28% of hospital HIM staff are not credentialed)
  - May reveal things the profession does not want to hear/not ready to hear (i.e. underutilization of assistive personnel)

- Acknowledging the non-traditional workforce and educational programs
  - The non-credentialed workforce (i.e. the nurse who also codes)
  - The non-traditional educational paths (i.e. continuing education, internet courses, on-the-job training)
Implementation Challenges: Roadblocks Encountered in Translation Research into Policy

Most recommendations have not been implemented. Passing the baton from research to implementation has been difficult.

Why?

- Lack of an organizational infrastructure to interpret, and act on, recommendations
- Lack of champion change agent
- Limited sense of common outlook and/or desire to change status quo
- Imbalance of power
- Limited outcomes data
- Limited coordination among educators and employers for long-term planning
How Can Workforce Planning Efforts Improve?

- Better Data Collection and Analysis

- Develop, Nurture and Sustain Solid Partnerships
  - With all members of the workforce, not just those represented by a professional association (acknowledging and identifying the non-credentialed)
  - With competing credentialing/certifying organizations
  - With assistive personnel or other professions
  - With employers to solve local/regional/state workforce shortages
Unit of Analysis for Planning

- Hospital
- Neighboring hospitals
- Regional planning among educational programs and health care facilities
- State-wide/provincial planning efforts
Unit of Analysis for Planning

- National (international?) allied health workforce planning?
For More Information

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