

Innovative Service Development in Chronic Illness Populations

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Overview

Over seven million Australians have at least one chronic health condition, generating billions of dollars of avoidable health expenditure every year. The inter-professional practice model is a natural fit for the treatment of chronic illness, but it doesn't fit easily within the constraints of our current health system.

Successful, inter-professional, allied health treatment models exist and share a number of key features in common. We propose a process for the design and implementation of innovative allied health programs, aligned with current literature and informed by practice (see Figure 2). The model aims at reducing the impacts of chronic illness in populations where treatment and recovery are influenced by service responses to psychosocial complexity.

Innovative Rehab and Our Services

Innovative Rehab is a team of allied health professionals and researchers who are passionate about service development and applied clinical research. We collaborate with health services to develop treatment programs, manage operational risk and design innovative training modules to upskill and inspire allied health staff. Whatever the challenge, we offer practical solutions and advice to engage patients, build services and create treatment approaches that change the way we think about rehab.

Inter-professional Practice:

A New Approach to Complex Care Provision

To cope with the increasing complexity of health-care, organizations are recognizing the need for effective teamwork between the health professions (Institute of Medicine, 2001).

Uni-professional approaches are no longer able to meet the needs and expectations of the patient, nor can professionals that continue to work in silos provide optimal care.

There is also growing patient and community expectation of increased partnership and inclusion in the healthcare process (Nisbet, 2011)

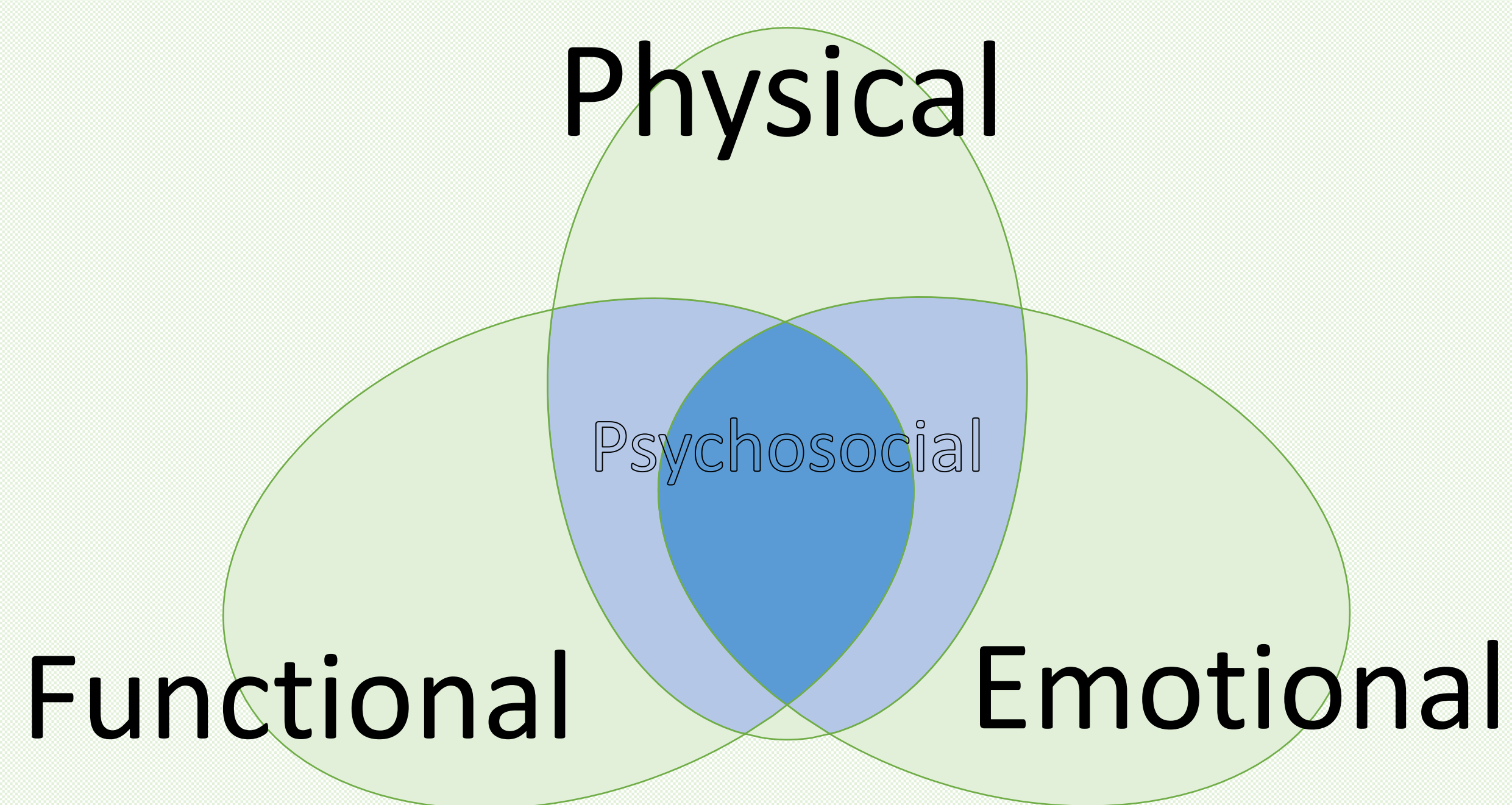


Figure 1. An inter-professional approach to working with chronic illness.

A Biopsychosocial Approach

Effective inter-professional practice uses a biopsychosocial approach, which recognises areas of overlap across the allied health disciplines, as well as acknowledging the additional impact of psychosocial factors on treatment engagement and recovery. This interconnectedness is illustrated in Figure 1 (opposite)

In addition to assessing the physical, functional and emotional aspects of chronic illness, risk factors (or “flags”) for long term disability are identified and incorporated into treatment and service models (Worksafe Victoria, 2012).

At an individual level, this refers to the unique combination of Biological, Mental Health, Psychological, Social and Financial factors impacting on a given person's illness experience at any given time.

At a service level, psychosocial factors might include treatment environment, accessibility, cultural considerations and broader societal context.

Innovation in Practice

Service Definition

Develop an understanding of organisation and end-user needs, then generate service ideas.

A range of inter-professional models exist, including discrete services, co-ordinated teams, shared-care, multi-purpose services, community controlled initiatives, outreach approaches and telehealth models.

Financial Analysis

Review current contracts, funding models and fee schedules, as well as current financial plans and priorities.

Allow for things not going to plan (such as patient non-attendance).

Adding dollars to service models makes it easier to differentiate between different options. Determine the level of profitability required to be sustainable.

Stakeholder Profiling

Identify the people and organisations who will be impacted.

Who has the power to influence funding and direct resources (like gym facilities and staff)?

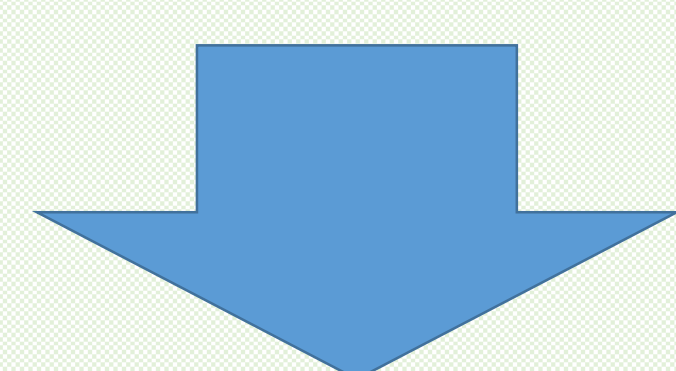
Does anyone has the power to stop the service developing? Who can influence success?

Operational Risk Management

Know the parts of your service that are critical to success and track these regularly.

This can include clinical variables, resources (such as appropriately skilled allied health staff), financial targets and record keeping compliance.

Figure 2. A process for the design and implementation of inter-professional allied health programs in chronic illness populations



Next Steps

We are trialling and evaluating this process in several of the service “black spots” around Australia (including Northern Territory and Tasmania)

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