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Barriers To The Implementation Of A Comprehensive, Outcomes-Oriented, Information Infrastructure For Mental Health Services.

Abstract

A comprehensive information infrastructure involves much more than data collections. To be effective and useful it must include three components:

- protocols and systems for the collection of the required data;
- systems for data analysis and reporting of results back to users; and
- methods for the use of information in service management and improvement.

Together these three components are like the legs of a tripod - if one is missing the tripod can't stand. It should be clear that perseverance and patience will be essential if we are to realise the very substantial potential benefit to all stakeholders that will follow the complete implementation of a fully developed outcome-oriented information infrastructure in mental health services.

We now have substantial experience, in both the public and private sectors, of implementing the routine collection of minimum data sets and standardised measures for the evaluation of service provision and health outcomes. Many of the problems encountered in implementing those collections, and in then ensuring that they are sustained, stem from the simple fact that we have not yet fully developed and implemented the other two components of the infrastructure. The development and implementation of adequate systems for data analysis and reporting is still in its early stages. And without sustainable data collections linked to adequate systems for reporting and analysis it is very difficult to develop and implement methods for the use of that information in service management and development.

In this presentation, barriers to the successful implementation of each of these three components of the information infrastructure will be discussed.

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