AN INTEGRATED PRACTICE MODEL FOR ENHANCING PUBLIC HEALTH NUTRITION PRACTICE AND WORKFORCE PREPARATION

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Public health nutrition (PHN) is a diverse discipline area that spans the spectrum of under-nutrition to over-nutrition, in multiple forms, amongst a range of populations, in many settings and contexts. This complexity creates significant challenges in PHN practice and for PHN workforce development. Previous studies exploring PHN practice priorities have identified intervention management and capacity building as core workforce functions, without which PHN effort is likely to be ineffective. In practice, the competency mix required to effectively manage interventions and build capacity has been shown to be quite broad, drawing on a mix of analytical, management, strategic planning, leadership and organisational competencies. Unfortunately, there is precious little scholarship about the most effective and efficient methods to develop these competencies. A new model for public health nutrition intervention management practice, designed to facilitate practice improvement and provide a step-wise approach to assist with PHN workforce preparation, is proposed. It has been developed based on a decade of piloting and evaluating PHN workforce preparation in Australia and Europe, and research on PHN workforce practices and development needs. This model recognises the progressive and cumulative nature of public health nutrition practice and explicitly integrates capacity building practices into the conventional assessment-planning implementation-evaluation sequence, widely applied and taught amongst nutrition students. This practice framework emphasises the process, tools and rationale for practice approaches in public health nutrition, encourages discipline in PHN practice, and provides a new learning and teaching framework for educators training graduates for PHN work.

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