

Evaluating the impact of the ‘MOVE’ Mentoring Programme with early career physiotherapists. A Pilot Study.

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Introduction

The “MOVE” Mentoring Programme is designed to provide early career physiotherapists with mentoring support to identify their priority needs and provide support and guidance to help them source, drive and evaluate activities that help achieve their goals. “MOVE” reflects the mentoring programme structure that involves:

1. **Map:** Mapping the goals to a plan
2. **Options:** Identifying options and activities to achieve the goals
3. **Verify:** Verify the actions the mentee will take to implement activities
4. **Evaluate:** Evaluate the activity, what was helpful and what improvements can be made for next sessions.

Project Outline

Aim:

The purpose of this pilot project is to identify the key benefits of the MOVE Mentoring Programme on new graduate physiotherapists (mentees) and their mentors who will participate in a 4-month structured mentoring programme from March – June 2022.

Problem:

Most registered physiotherapists in New Zealand work in private practice (Reid & Dixon, 2018). This is also reflected in Australian workforce data where it has been reported that half of all registered physiotherapists work in musculoskeletal physiotherapy, with the majority of those working in private practice (Health Workforce Australia, 2014).

Several issues have been identified relating to the readiness of new graduate physiotherapists to perform safely and effectively in the musculoskeletal private practice environment:

- New graduates report they feel underprepared for managing workloads and the psychosocial aspects of patient care. (Reid & Dixon, 2018)
- There is insufficient variety in clinical placements in undergraduate training and only limited scope of exposure to many musculoskeletal conditions during these placements limiting their experience with many conditions. (Kennedy, 2021; Reid & Dixon, 2018).
- There are gaps in communication skills due to use of devices over face-to-face interactions during training. (Reid & Dixon, 2018)
- New Zealand physiotherapists have been identified as most likely to exit the profession within the first two years, and data from Australia suggests as many as 65% of recent graduates are likely to leave the profession within 10-years (Mulcahy et al., 2010; Bacopanos & Edgar, 2016).
- Access to peer support and mentoring has been identified as an important factor for job satisfaction in private practice by 96% of new graduates (Davies, Edgar & Debenham, 2016).
- The Australian Physiotherapy Association (2013) reports that optimising support and mentoring for the next generation of physiotherapists will be important to facilitate retention in the sector.

Methodology

This project will involve a group of experienced physiotherapy mentors who receive mentor training and then undertake 1-1 mentoring with new graduate students.

Mentors: Registered physiotherapists will be invited to participate as mentors in this study (n=15-30). These individuals will undertake a virtual mentor training program (3-4 hours duration) that focuses on:

- Defining what mentoring is and is not
- Establishing a quality relationship
- Discussing the Mentoring Agreement and Mentee Development Plan
- Exploring mentoring methods (coach, support, teach, delegate)
- Dealing with issues/challenges

At the end of the training, mentors will provide feedback on the programme, and then be allocated one or two mentees. Mentors will work with their mentee(s) in 4x 1-hour sessions between March and June 2022. The first session will focus on completion of the Mentoring Agreement and the Mentee Development Plan. The focus of subsequent sessions will be guided by the priorities stated in the mentee's development plan, or whatever is topical for them that they wish to bring to the mentoring session.

At the end of the programme, mentors will be invited to participate in a focus-group debrief session (1-2 hours). The key questions for discussion will be:

- How well did the mentor training programme prepare you for your role?
- How could the training programme be improved?
- What were the main benefits of working as a mentor?
- What were the challenges of working as a mentor?
- What suggestions can mentors offer to improve the MOVE Mentoring Programme?

Mentees: Thirty graduate physiotherapists from the three physiotherapy schools in New Zealand (Otago, Auckland University of Technology and Waikato Institute of Technology) will be invited to participate in the study (n=30). Individuals who volunteer to participate in the project will complete a Mentee Development Plan and participate in 4 x 1-hour 1-1 mentoring sessions with an experienced physiotherapist mentor. Between mentoring sessions, each mentee may be required to complete follow-up activities that they have identified and discussed with their mentor during a session. At the conclusion of the mentoring programme, mentees will be invited to participate in a focus group debrief session (1-2-hours).

The key questions for discussion will be:

- What were the main benefits of the programme for mentees?
- What were the challenges of the programme for mentees?
- What suggestions can mentees offer to improve the MOVE Mentoring Programme?

Data Analysis: Content analysis of written responses and transcripts from focus-groups for both mentors and mentees will be undertaken to identify themes that enable tabulation and summarising the data.

Timeline January to July 2022

2022	Task
January	Recruit participants
February	Provide training programme for mentors Pair mentors and mentees Mentoring commences – Session 1 will focus on the Mentoring Agreement and discussion of the Mentee Development Plan
March	Session 2 will focus on priorities from the Mentee Development Plan or whatever topic the mentee wishes to raise with their mentor
April	Session 3 will focus on priorities from the Mentee Development Plan or whatever topic the mentee wishes to raise with their mentor
May	Mentoring concludes – Session 4 will focus on priorities from the Mentee Development Plan or whatever topic the mentee wishes to raise with their mentor
June	Focus-group follow up with mentors and mentees
July-October	Analysis, write up research for publication

Time Requirement for Mentors

Mentors will undertake a virtual mentor training program (one session of 3-4 hours duration in total) and then commit to 4 x 1-hour 1-1 mentoring sessions with a new graduate physiotherapist:

- 1st session to be completed before the end of February 2022
- 2nd session to be completed before the end of March 2022
- 3rd session to be completed before the end of April 2022
- 4th session to be completed before the end of May 2022

In June, mentors will participate in a debrief session at the end of the programme (1-2-hours). The total time commitment for mentors will be approximately 10-hours.

Time Requirement for Mentees

Mentees will complete a Mentee Development Plan and participate in 4 x 1-hour 1-1 mentoring sessions with an experienced physiotherapist mentor. Between mentoring sessions, a mentee may have follow-up activities to complete as agreed with their mentor. At the conclusion of the programme, mentees will be invited to participate in a debrief session (1-2-hours). The total time commitment for mentees will be approximately 10-hours.

Potential Benefits

Mentors:

- Mentor training designed to further develop the knowledge, skills, and confidence of physiotherapy mentors will be provided 'free of charge'. The training and engagement as a mentor in the MOVE programme has the potential to benefit physiotherapists in their ongoing work as clinicians, managers and leaders within the profession.

Mentees:

- The provision of 'free' 1-1 mentoring by experienced physiotherapists has the potential to build the confidence and competence of mentees with tailored early career development and support.

Community:

- The physiotherapy profession may benefit by retaining more staff who are better equipped to manage the demands of work in their first year of practice. This also has potential flow-on benefits for patients/clients in terms of the quality and consistency of treatment provided, in particular by early career physiotherapists.

Dissemination of Results

The researchers intend to publish the results of this study in the NZ Journal of Physiotherapy (or similar peer reviewed journal). We will also present findings and recommendations at relevant professional meetings and conferences.

References

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