

# RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

## Clinical Assessment underpins good healthcare

**Professor Wendy Hu from the School of Medicine is leading a team that is examining the healthcare settings of medicine, nursing, occupational therapy, physiotherapy and podiatry to assess workloads in clinical assessment of students. The project is supported by Health Workforce Australia, an Australian Government Initiative.**

'Clinical assessments of trainee health workers are conducted in the demanding real world of healthcare services to assess students' practical knowledge and skills, thus ensuring they will provide safe and competent patient care on graduation,' says Professor Hu. 'Workplace-based assessments are increasingly part of professional entry and vocational training programs in all health fields, but with increasing student numbers and a growing diversity of clinical placements, a critical element underpinning the safety and quality of healthcare is under pressure.'

Several factors are barriers to ensuring the effective implementation of workplace-based assessments. The assessments are usually the responsibility of clinical supervisors who may have variable experience and training. Lack of time, resources and a heavy workload may also be reasons for shortfalls in the assessment system.

Previous research has focused on improving the reliability of assessment tools and scales, but little is known about what happens in patient-focused healthcare settings. A pilot program confirmed that assessment workload is a persistent concern for clinical supervisors, whose tasks may include briefing of patients and staff, briefing and observing students, giving feedback and documenting results.



For this real-time project, the research team is recording expert clinical supervisors as they conduct assessments of professional entry students in 10 hospitals, community centres and private practices. Video, audio and observational notes will be used by the research team to develop a model for clinical assessment workloads. Examples of expert practice will be documented.

Key aims include clarifying supervisor roles, knowledge, skills in assessment and workload, and identifying role models. The project will form the basis for a model for more accurate measurement and costing of the important task of clinical supervision.

**Project Title:** An Evidence-Based Model of Clinical Assessment Workload in the Health Professions

**Funding has been set at:** \$80,000

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