

Health services research is multidisciplinary, cross-sector research focused on learning health systems and underpinning the effective management and delivery of health services in Australia. Health services that integrate health services research result in direct benefits in patient outcomes, overall quality of care, and improvements in healthcare costs and policy development

BACKGROUND

Australia's health system is facing significant challenges. To address these challenges and achieve impact at scale, health services research that focuses on health policy, health economics, implementation science; and more directly on the structure, function, resilience, and capacity of the health system is needed.

The integration of physical, mental, and social dimensions of health must also be considered.

Investing in health services research represents an opportunity to secure Australia's long term economic, health and social prosperity.

AHHA POSITION

- Health services research is essential for the adoption and translation of advances in basic science and clinical research into routine care for the benefit of all Australians.
- Health services research must be embedded in community, and public health and service settings to facilitate integrated knowledge translation and improve the health outcomes of people and their communities.
- Alignment and coordination of the Medical Research Future Fund (MRFF) and the National Medical Research Endowment Account (MREA) must prioritise health services and systems research and consider the broader determinants of health and the needs of the Australian public health system to improve the health and wellbeing of Australians.
- Effective health services and systems research must include both clinicians and health service practitioners and be carried out in partnership with health services research experts, policy makers, health economists and people with lived experience, including those from priority populations and vulnerable communities.
- Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people must lead research into indigenous health issues to ensure the closing of the gap.
- Ensuring adequate resourcing for fundamental and clinical research to support high-quality healthcare services is crucial. This will help minimise delays in translating research innovations into practical policy applications.
- Government investment should focus on those areas of health services research that build evidence in primary care, focusing on preventative health and acute and chronic disease. Innovative care models that consider collaboration within the health system and between sectors must also be supported.
- Governments must ensure that wellbeing approaches are sustainable, avoid duplication and complement current health services and systems research that define value in relation to health outcomes.
- Government should prioritise and make transparent development of the National Medical Workforce Strategy 2021-2031 plan to build a sustainable and reliable health research workforce. This should include funding strategies that extend beyond reliance on the MRFF and MREA alone; and include resources to enhance the capacity of existing health services researchers, clinician researchers and health consumers seeking to improve health services and health systems.
- The integrity of peer review and transparency overall of research funding decisions and disbursements must be protected.