



Service provider perspectives: challenges and opportunities of a physical healthcare navigator

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Acknowledgement of Country

Recognition of Lived Experience

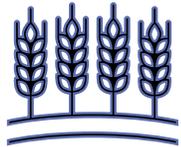


The challenges



- People with mental health conditions, often have poorer physical health
 - yet they often get poorer quality care, later than they should
 - and die younger*

→ 46 people a day die from **potentially preventable chronic physical health conditions**



- Rural mental health workforce is very limited
- To support existing rural mental health teams –
Could consumers and carers play a role in helping people to get their physical health care needs met?



The opportunities



What if people with a lived experience were central to this project?



The workforce is expanding – e.g. peer workers, new clinical and psychosocial support roles



To create a new model/s of care that better support collaboration and improve physical health care and outcomes



Including how the research project is led and carried out

The Mind And Body Care Navigator Trial

NHMRC Grant - Targeted Call for Research: Improving physical health of people with a mental illness 2022

Consumers and carers as Physical Health Care Navigators in rural Australia: A randomised trial

Prof Russell Roberts, Tim Heffernan, A/Prof Chris Maylea, Prof Lisa Brophy, Prof Amanda Wheeler, A/Prof Belinda Cash, Dr Hazel Dalton, A/Prof Christian Swann, Dr Clifford Lewis, Prof David Lawrence



*For more on this – see Equally Well - <https://www.equallywell.org.au/>

Collaborative team

Co-leads
Tim
Heffernan
&
Russell
Roberts



Lived
Experience
Leadership
Team

9 Consumers
3 Carers
2 LE researchers



Research
team

10 Chief Investigators
5 Universities
Mental Health
Commission



Other expert
advisors

12 other Expert
Advisors –
academic &
industry



Overall project aims



Review literature on how care navigators improve physical health in people with a lived experience of mental ill-health



Find out how consumers and carers seek and find physical health care



Find out what rural mental health workers need to provide good physical health care



Co-design a Physical Health Care Navigator (PHCN) model of care*



To test this model in a trial, compared to usual care



Share what we learn to improve services



* Three kinds of navigator –
Health professional, Lived Experience – consumer and carer

Stage 2c aims



Understand the opportunities and challenges in improving physical health care for people with lived experience of mental health issues in rural Australia.

Explore health providers' views on what a physical health care navigation model should include and what would help its design and implementation.



* Three kinds of navigator in prospective trial –
Health professional, Lived Experience – consumer and carer

Methodology

- Interviews (~60 min) with healthcare providers
- Questions on the nature of their roles and experience, health service provision, teamwork and thoughts on the features needed for a physical health care navigation model.
- Several vignettes of related care models were used as stimulus to guide the interviews; however their primary experience was first drawn upon.
- Interviews were recorded and transcribed verbatim. Field notes will be taken by the interviewer.
- Coding supported by Nvivo software. Two researchers discussed and agreed on aggregate themes.

NB preliminary.



Results - participants



- Interviews (n=12)

Region	Rural, regional and remote NSW and QLD
Service type	6 organisations across State Health and NGOs
Role type (current)	Leadership and management through clinical and peer workforce
Years experience	New (< 3 months) through to 20+ years
Profession type	Across nursing, allied health, peer and community service workforce

Results Key Themes

Physical health care navigator

Role

Consumer-centred

Rapport building

Advocacy

Health literacy

Skills & attributes

Implementation

Model of care

Multidisciplinary teamwork

Training & support

Scope of practice

Clinical of LE (peer & carer)

Contextual considerations

Access to care

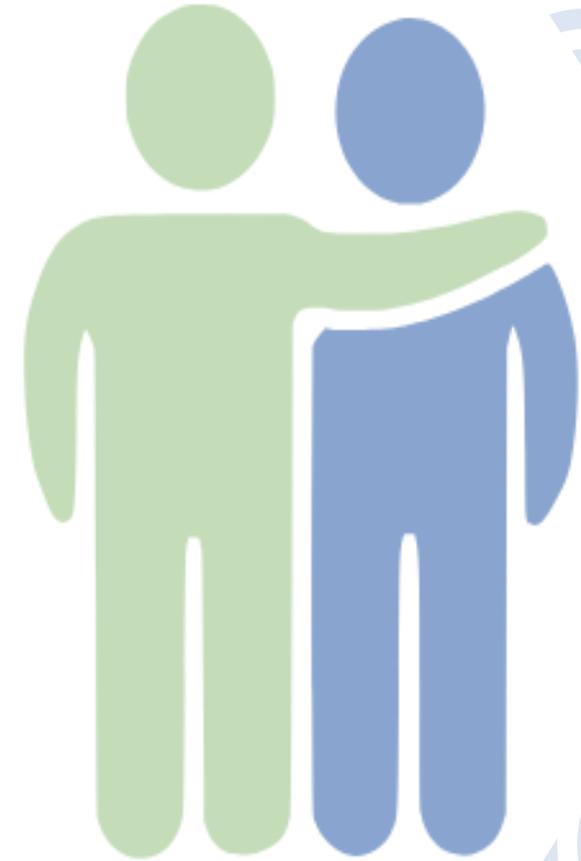
Rural and remote

State health of NGO



Physical health care navigator role

- Consumer-centred (walk alongside)
- Rapport building
- Advocacy
- Health literacy
- System navigation – collaborative, working in partnership with other care professionals (not stand alone)



Implementation - Model of care

- Multidisciplinary teamwork
- Training & support
- Scope of practice
- Local knowledge and relationships – therefore experience needed
- Navigator type – Clinical, lived experience (peer & carer)





Navigator type

	Clinical	Peer	Carer
Strengths	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clinical expertise• understanding of health system• broker access (within)	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Holistic perspective• warm referrals• walk alongside person	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Strong system navigation experience• Empathy• Participants viewed carer as likely good PHCN
Challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Clinical focus – can miss other determinants – e.g. stigma and system challenges	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Brokering physical care access in some settings	<ul style="list-style-type: none">• Least considered type (untapped resource)• personal carer responsibilities?– reasonable adjustments



Implementation – Contextual considerations



Access to care

Rural and remote

- Waitlists and lack of services
- Workforce shortages – lack of specialists
- Health and digital literacy of consumers

“In a regional context, it's really well and good to link, but a lot of the time in our world there's no one to link to, and so we actually are holding people for longer.” P5

“I think it's really important for our workforce to actually be health and digital literate to... support our consumers with their health and digital literacy as well, especially in a regional context where there's a lot telehealth.” P5



Implementation – Contextual considerations



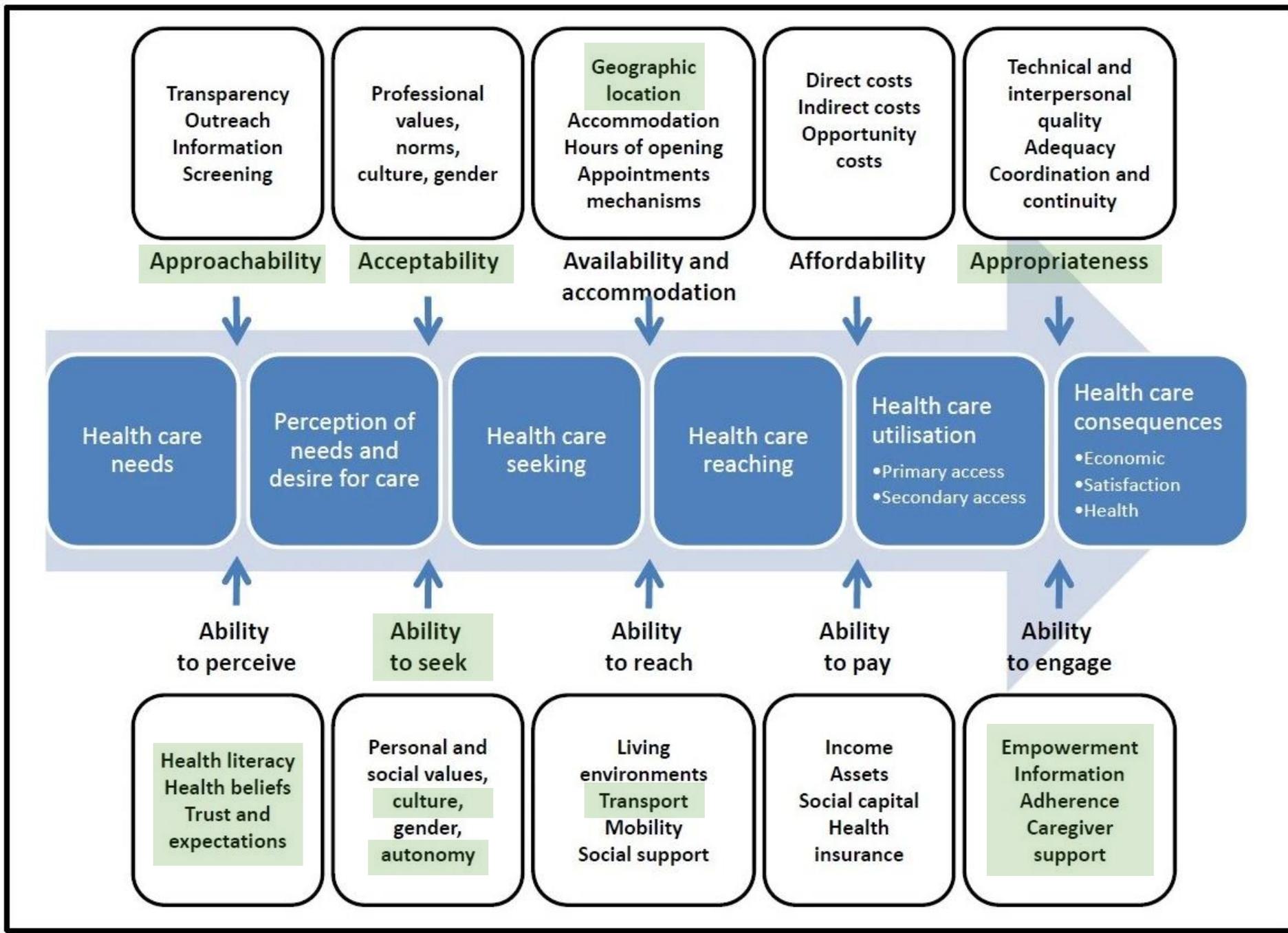
Access to care

State health compared to NGOs – system fragmentation

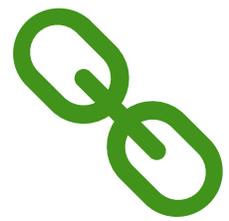
“I think if the health navigator was employed by [state health service], they've already sort of got a bit of an in with the health team. If they are NGO that might put them on the outer.” P3

“in the NGO landscape, we kind of have no choice but to work more on the grey which I actually love, which is why I work for an NGO where you can be a little bit more creative and innovative.” P5





ACCESS



Discussion



These findings have informed the model of care and the trial (2026).

The trial aims to address some of the challenges identified in this study.

All those interviewed for this study support the development of a physical health care navigator role to:

- work with consumers to break down barriers to physical health care
- increase access to preventive health care
- increase physical health literacy for people with mental health conditions.

Ultimately, we hope this initiative will help reduce the unacceptable mortality gap that currently exists for people with mental health conditions.





Thank you

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