The role of research facilitation positions in health services: A scoping review

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Abstract

Abstract Background: Research facilitation (RF) positions are a developing workforce in health services. The aim of this review was to explore literature on the role and impact of these positions. Methods: A scoping review was conducted using three inclusion criteria. 1. Population: Articles about RF positions; 2. Concept: Articles that describe the roles and duties of RF positions, and/or report how their impact is evaluated; 3. Context: RF positions employed by, or have a significant role within, health services. Medline, EMBASE and CINAHL electronic databases were searched in June 2022 for records from 2000-present. Full text articles published in English were included. Data were extracted regarding the structure, responsibilities, and evaluation of RF positions. Results: Eighteen articles were included, representing 86 RF positions. Most positions were orientated to support nursing or allied health research. Position titles and structure varied widely. Whilst key responsibilities were highly heterogeneous, almost all included providing direct support to health service staff to engage in research, and many included facilitating research education. A range of measures were used to evaluate RF positions, with traditional academic outputs such as publications and grants most frequent. Quantitative evidence of the impact of RF positions was weak, though positive. Qualitative evaluations revealed the important role of RF positions in research capacity and evidence-based practice. Conclusion: RF positions provided a wide variety of supports to clinicians and health services. While there is some positive evidence of the value of RF positions, further research is needed on their structure and outcomes.

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