

Strategy 3. Build population health research capability

Strategy 3.1: Build skills for population health research

Population health traineeships

The Centre for Epidemiology and Evidence, NSW Ministry of Health coordinates three postgraduate workplace-based training programs in population health; the [Aboriginal Population Health Training Initiative \(APHTI\)](#), [Biostatistics Training Program](#) and [Public Health Training Program](#), demonstrating *Population Health Research Strategy 3.1 (Building skills for population health research)*.

The programs aim to develop public health professionals with a broad range of capabilities relevant to population health research, including data management and analysis, study design, monitoring and surveillance, qualitative research, critical appraisal, evaluation, project management, and policy development. Trainees undertake three years of supervised work placements within the NSW Health system and relevant population health research centres. Current research-based placements include the Aboriginal Health and Medical Research Council of NSW, Kolling Institute of Medical Research, Prevention Research Collaboration, Sax Institute and School of Rural Health, University of Sydney.

In addition to work placements, trainees participate in regular capability building activities including training in evaluation and research methods, management and leadership, scientific communication, health economics and information systems including SAPHaRI (Secure Analytics for Population Health Research and Intelligence) and HealthStats NSW.

More than 300 trainees have been recruited across the three programs, and there are currently around 50 trainees. Trainees recruited since 2009 have contributed to more than 350 publications (approximately three per trainee), including 273 peer-reviewed journal articles, as of July 2019.

As a direct result of their training, 160 people have been awarded a postgraduate qualification. This includes 16 Doctor of Public Health degrees, 63 Master of Biostatistics degrees, 12 Master of Public Health degrees and 69 Graduate Diplomas of Applied Epidemiology.

The programs have produced 186 graduates who typically remain employed within the NSW Health system, where they apply their skills in a range of population health research, development, policy and planning roles. The programs demonstrate the sustained dedication and contribution of NSW Health to building workforce capacity and capability in the area of population health research.

The programs also play an important role in supporting research and evaluation in Aboriginal health. In particular, the NSW Aboriginal Population Health Training Initiative (APHTI) facilitates the development of research leadership capability of Aboriginal people. The three-year traineeships are open only to Aboriginal Australians, and involve a combination of workplace learning within a NSW Health service and postgraduate study in public health. Trainees study research methods as part of their master's degree, and directly apply this learning through workplace projects, typically in Aboriginal health. The program also addresses regional and rural research capacity and capability issues associated with access to training; since the program commenced in 2011, 18 (64%) of trainees have been based in health services in regional or rural areas of NSW.

Further reading

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NSW Public Health Training Program Competency Framework. Centre for Epidemiology and Evidence. Sydney: NSW Ministry of Health, 2014. Available from: www.health.nsw.gov.au/training/phot/Publications/pht-competency-framework.pdf

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