

Better Hearing for Farming Families Project

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Better Hearing for Farming Families Project

Goal:

Reduce the impact of noise injury on farming families

Objectives:

1. Improve awareness of prevention and hearing health practices
2. Improve access to services providing hearing health advice, screening etc
3. Improve networking of services in local communities

Selective Hearing Aids for Men



What We Already Know

- Approx 60-70% of farmers have a hearing loss resulting from their occupation
- Noise injury impacts on all ages - even young farmers aged 15-24 have considerable deficits (~30%)



Better Hearing for Farming Families Project

- 12-month pilot project
- Target centres
 1. Broken Hill (Western NSW)
 2. Casino (Northern NSW)
 3. Tamworth (New England Region NSW)

Social Network Analysis

1. Current roles that different agencies play in relation to preventing hearing loss and/or provision of audiometric screening / clinical hearing services for farmers.
2. Perceived barriers to increasing service access/utilization by farmers and seek guidance on potential solutions to these barriers.
3. Results inform the conduct of the project in improving the networking of services in local communities and increase the potential for sustainability

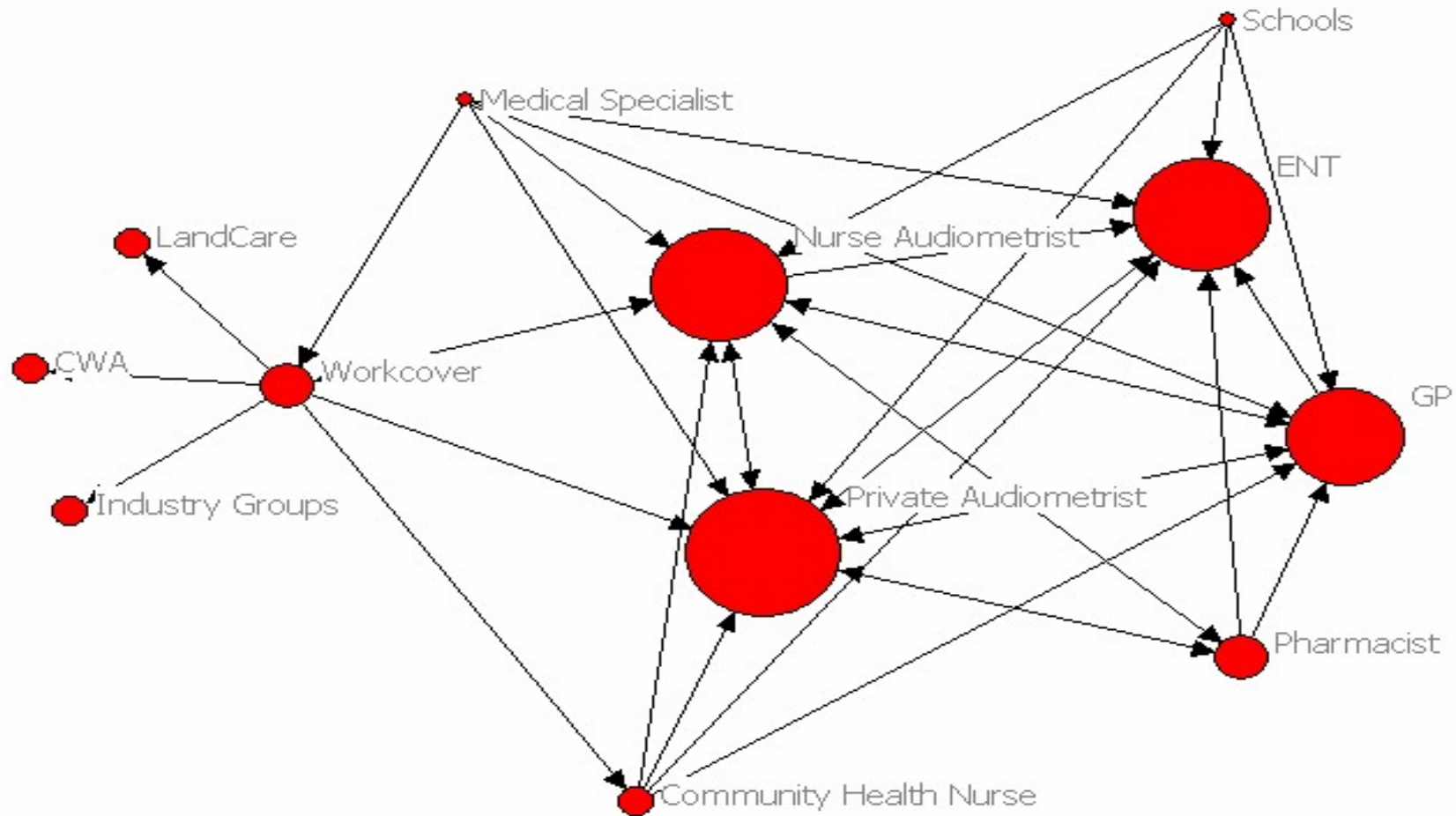
Method

1. Identify all local stakeholders
2. Face validity - panel including National Acoustic Laboratories
3. Questions
 - information exchange
 - client referrals
 - perceived barriers to service delivery
 - perceived barriers for adoption by farmers
4. Phone or face-to-face interviews
5. Data input (UCINET) and analysis

Results – New England Region

- 16 agencies defined - 13 provided data for assessment (80%)
- Information provision links - Nurse audiometrists (7), Workcover NSW (6), Agricultural retailers (6) and ENT (5) (Mean links 2.53)
- Referral links to - Private audiometry services (8), Nurse audiometrists (7), ENT (7), GPs (6) (Mean links 2.12)

New England - Referral Pattern To



Service Provision Barriers

Perceived barriers to better hearing service provision included:

- Distance
- Cost of advertising
- Lack of suitably qualified staff
- Stigma of hearing loss in the farming community
- Health service priorities

Service Provision Options

- Increased emphasis on hearing screening as the first component of improved clinical services.
- Provision of free regular screening activities at locations where farmers congregate e.g. sale yards (i.e. increase mobile screening) and agricultural field days.
- Extension of Medicare rebates or health insurance to cover hearing screening. Including, lobbying government to include farmers who are still working (but not making money), to be eligible for free hearing services through Centrelink, particularly during the prevailing drought.

What this means

- Nurse audiometrists in NSW provide a central prevention & screening / service role.
- NSW Workcover and agricultural retailers can have important roles in prevention.
- Greater involvement of existing agricultural organisations is required for prevention and as referral points for screening/service e.g. CWA, Landcare
- Linkage with other health issues is not well recognised e.g. mental health