

# WORLD CONGRESS ON MENTAL HEALTH

November 13-14, 2019 | London, UK

## A delphi survey of practitioner's understanding of mental capacity

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**Purpose:** The introduction of the Mental Capacity Act and Deprivation of Liberty Safeguards has provided the basis for sweeping changes in health and social care. This study explores the views of practitioners including GPs, nurses, social workers, physio/occupational therapists and care assistants who were presented with a variety of scenarios.

**Design/methodology/approach:** The Delphi method was used to elicit the views of participants. It was aimed at generating a consensus of opinion. This method usually works with a large sample for heterogeneous groups, so in the first round 98 participants from a range of professional groups participated.

**Findings:** Participant responses demonstrated inconsistencies in their interpretation of the scenarios. Disagreements were most profound when a patient's decision was in conflict with clinical advice, and when to conduct a capacity assessment. Participant responses highlight the lack of consensus in clinical, even within settings or professions. This demonstrates the complication surrounding the MCA and its application in practice.

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