

3rd International Conference

PEDIATRICS & PEDIATRIC HEALTHCARE

April 27-28, 2023 | Amsterdam, The Netherlands

Received Date: 01-12-2022 | Accepted date: 03-12-2022 | Published date: 15-05-2023

A retrospective audit of an integrative Australian health clinic embedded in a specialised school for children with externalising behavior

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Background: Problematic externalising behaviours in adolescents are associated with high individual and societal burden. A school-based multidisciplinary health clinic ('Ngaramadhi Space') was developed at Yudi Gunyi School (YGS), a specialised behavioural school in Sydney, Australia, to improve access to holistic healthcare and behavioural support. This evaluation aimed to describe the demographics, clinic attendance, health screening, recommendations made, and changes in behaviour of students attending the clinic.

Methods: Retrospective evaluation of students (26 July 2016-14 May 2019; n=79). Changes in Strengths and Difficulties Questionnaire (SDQ) scores were analysed.

Results: Prior to the assessment, few students engaged with a paediatrician or mental health professional (22.8%; 27.8% respectively). Child protection services were involved with 76%.

Clinic attendance was high (failure-to-attend=7.6%; cancellations=8.9%). New issues included: parental separation (31.6%); trauma history (27.8%); substance use (19%); emotional wellbeing concerns (16.5%), learning difficulties (12.7%), domestic violence (12.7%) and medical conditions (10.1%). SDQ teacher reports: significant decrease in total difficulties scores (M=6.2, SD=6.165, $p<0.05$, $\eta^2=1.013$ (large effect)) and all subsets. No significant differences in parent and self-reported SDQ.

Discussion: Multidisciplinary school-based clinics in Sydney for students experiencing significant behavioural problems have high initial engagement rates. This approach allows unmet health and wellbeing needs to be managed, with some evidence of improved short-term behavioural outcomes. These clinics are feasible within Australia and offer an innovative approach to a complex public health issue.

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