

Multidisciplinary care

A model for achieving best practice cancer care

What is multidisciplinary care?

Multidisciplinary care is a collaborative approach to treatment planning and ongoing care throughout the treatment pathway. Multidisciplinary care aims to ensure that members of the treatment and care team can discuss all relevant aspects of a cancer patient's physical and psychosocial needs along with other factors impacting upon the patient's care¹.

Multidisciplinary care encompasses:

- A focus on continuity of care
- Development of pathways and protocols for treatment and care
- Development of appropriate referral networks, including appropriate referral pathways to meet psychosocial needs
- Development of multidisciplinary team meeting audit mechanisms
- Consumers/patients who consent to their case being discussed by the multidisciplinary team and who understand the process, know that they will be informed about the treatment and care recommendations and will be involved in decision-making.

Why is it important?

The complex nature of cancer diagnoses and treatment requires effective care coordination and communication through a multidisciplinary approach to ensure best practice evidenced based care.

An effective multidisciplinary approach can result in a number of positive outcomes for patients receiving the care, teams providing the care and health services overall. Some of the benefits include:

- Improved treatment planning through consideration of full therapeutic range and thus improved outcomes^{2,3,4}
- Recognition of emotional needs of patients⁵
- Reduction of service duplication, improved coordination of services and development of clear lines of responsibility between members of the multidisciplinary team⁶
- Learning and educational opportunities for team members
- Improved team communication^{7,8}

Multidisciplinary teams and meetings

Multidisciplinary teams comprise health care practitioners required for all treatment and care decisions. Team members may be from the primary, community and acute care settings, the private and public sectors and may be from several health services. The dynamic nature of multidisciplinary teams allows for

flexibility in membership and ensures that team membership is reflective of the patient's medical and supportive care needs.

The 'gold standard' for multidisciplinary care is a team who meets regularly (in person or via teleconferencing) to prospectively plan care and treatment for all patients within a tumour group. Through this process, each team member understands the plan, knows who to refer the patient to and the patient remains at the centre of all care provided by the team.

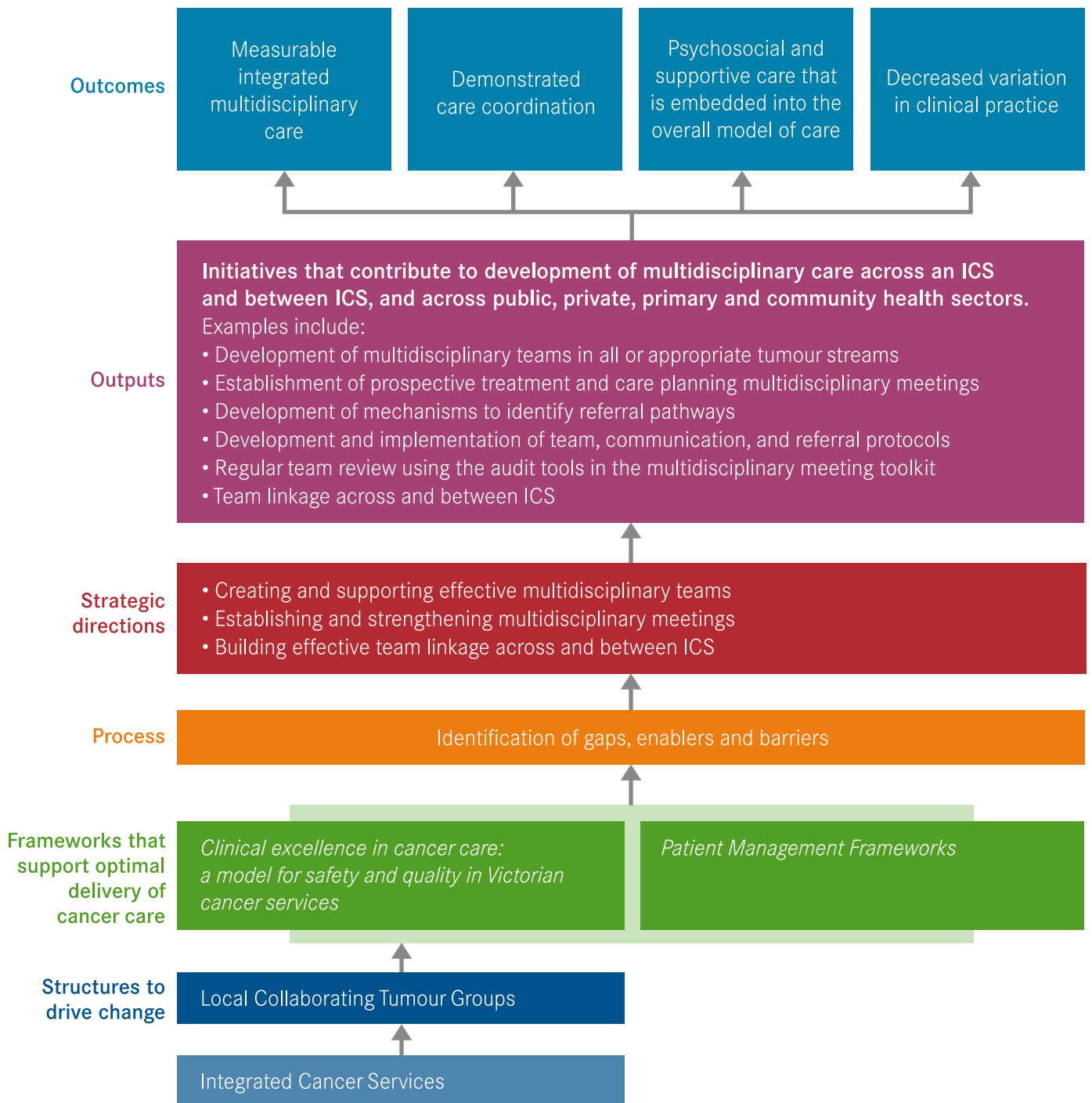
What is happening in Victoria to improve multidisciplinary care?

Multidisciplinary care is an integral part of care for all cancer patients from diagnosis through to palliative care. The aim in Victoria is to ensure a multidisciplinary team approach to prospective treatment and care planning that is aligned with best practice and evidence based care, for all cancer patients.

The three strategic directions that guide the development and implementation of initiatives for achieving multidisciplinary care in Victoria are:

- Creating and supporting effective multidisciplinary teams
- Establishing and strengthening multidisciplinary meetings
- Building effective team linkage across and between ICS

Victoria's model for multi-disciplinary care



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