

**Case for rethinking system leadership and its development
in public health (abstract only)**

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Title The case for rethinking system leadership and its development in public health

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Abstract Background

There is growing recognition of the importance of leadership in Public Health (PH) practice, and the need to embed it into the education and training of PH professionals. However, the theoretical discourse within leadership research has changed significantly and there is recognition that previous conceptualisations of leadership, and our ways of developing it may be flawed, and need to be changed in practice.

Objectives

This presentation will discuss development of leadership theory, and system leadership. In particular, it will highlight how System Leadership differs from previous understandings of leadership and the implications of this for ph practitioners and those charged with developing system leadership capacity within public health.

Body of the session

Leadership in organisations is mostly focused on current/anticipated internal challenges (strategy, performance management, staff engagement, etc.). Leaders are generally developed via individual leader development rather than a focus developing Leadership capacity across organisations/systems. Within PH it is increasingly realised that single organisations can no longer respond effectively to the “wicked” issues they face. They do not possess sufficient know-how to address the complex and multi-dimensional problems faced, so leadership models based on a single hierarchical organisation are not sustainable. There is a need to work collectively in an ecosystem based approach (not an ego-based system). System Leadership development requires that participants are actively engaged in real attempts to improve PH System. Development requires that underlying values are made explicit, explored and diversity embraced. The emphasis will be on supporting learners in the doing rather than critiquing or talking about it.

Conclusion

There is need to appreciate fully the nature of systems leadership, together with implications for ph practice and the development of system leadership capacity throughout the PH workforce.