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The International Society for Quality in Health Care  
**The Burlington Hotel, Dublin**  
11th – 14th October 2009

# **Strategies for accreditation surveyor professional development**

**Dr David Greenfield, Dr Marjorie Pawsey,  
Dr Justine Naylor, Ms Jo Travaglia and  
Prof Jeffrey Braithwaite**

## **ISQua 2009 - Designing for Quality**

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# Outline

1. Research context
2. Significance of the issue
3. Study objective
4. Method
5. Results
6. Discussion
7. Conclusion



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# 1. Research context

- Australian Institute of Health Innovation
- Centre for Clinical Governance Research in Health (CCGR)
- Australian Network for the Evaluation of Accreditation Standards in Healthcare (NEASH)



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# 1. Research context – AIHI

## *The Australian Institute of Health Innovation's Mission*

*Our mission is to enhance local, institutional and international health system decision-making through evidence; and use systems sciences and translational approaches to provide innovative, evidence-based solutions to specified health care delivery problems.*

<http://www.med.unsw.edu.au/medweb.nsf/page/IHI>



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# 1. Research context: CCGR

*The Centre for Clinical Governance Research undertakes strategic research, evaluations and research-based projects of national and international standing with a core interest to investigate health sector issues of policy, culture, systems, governance and leadership.*

<http://www.med.unsw.edu.au/medweb.nsf/page/ClinGov> [About](#)



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# 1. Research context - NEASH Team

- **Professor Jeffrey Braithwaite**
- **Dr David Greenfield**
- **Dr Marjorie Pawsey**
- Professor Johanna Westbrook
- Professor Bill Runciman
- Professor Sally Redman
- Professor Robert Gibberd
- Conjoint A/Professor Mary Westbrook
- **Dr Justine Naylor**
- Ms Sally Nathan
- Ms Maureen Robinson
- Ms Judie Lancaster
- **Ms Joanne Travaglia**
- Mr Brian Johnston
- Dr Desmond Yen
- Ms Lena Low
- Ms Heather McDonald
- Ms Darlene Hennessey
- Mrs Margaret Jackson
- Mr Angus Corbett
- Ms Betty Johnson
- Mr John Clark



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# 1. Research context - NEASH Team

- ACHS staff
- ACHS surveyors
- ACHS member organisations
- Consumer Reference Group
- Ramsay Health Care
- Research funded by the Australian Research Council Linkage funding scheme (project number LP0560737)



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## 2. Significance of the issue

Issue: what strategies do accreditation agencies have for surveyor professional development?

Changing health care environment, including:

- development of organisations;
- updating of clinical practices; and,
- expectations of professionals and community.

Result: evolution of accreditation program and standards.



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## 2. Significance of the issue

The credibility of accreditation agencies rests, in part, on the performance of their surveyor workforce.

A key issue: reliability – individual surveyors  
and between teams.

We conducted research into reliability in  
accreditation: see Greenfield et al. 2007, 2008, 2009.



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## 2. Significance of the issue

Reliability in accreditation surveying promoted by:

- **Collective training** (Greenfield et al. 2009, Schroter 2004, Frisino 2002 )
- **Ongoing assessment of surveyors** (Baglio 2004)
- **Use of a defined assessment program** (Greenfield et al. 2009, Frisino 2002)
- **Discussion and negotiation between surveyors** (Greenfield et al. 2009, Greenfield et al. 2008, Rees 2004)
- **Industry based peer reviewers** (Greenfield et al. 2009, Jayasinghie 2006, Frisino 2002)
- **Management of the surveyor workforce** (Greenfield et al. 2009)



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# 3. Study objective

Using this research we examined the question:

Are these activities effective strategies for surveyor professional development?



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# 4. Method

Study analysed data from four interrelated, independent, components:

A1. How do surveyors survey?

Ethnographic observation of a survey

A2. Do different survey teams make assessments consistent with each other?

Survey team scenario exercise



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# 4. Method

Study analysed data from four interrelated, independent, components:

A3. How do survey teams survey and do different survey teams make assessments consistent with each other?

Ethnographic observation of two survey teams assessing one organisation.

A4. Are individual surveyors consistent?

Surveyor intra-rater scenario exercise



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# 5. Results

A1: How do surveyors survey?

Ethnographic observation of a survey

reflect individually and with an external person  
*in situ*

- Identification of a surveyor styles  
typology

See: Greenfield, D., Braithwaite, J., & Pawsey, M. (2008). Health care accreditation surveyor styles typology. *International Journal for Health Care Quality Assurance*, 21(5), 435-443.



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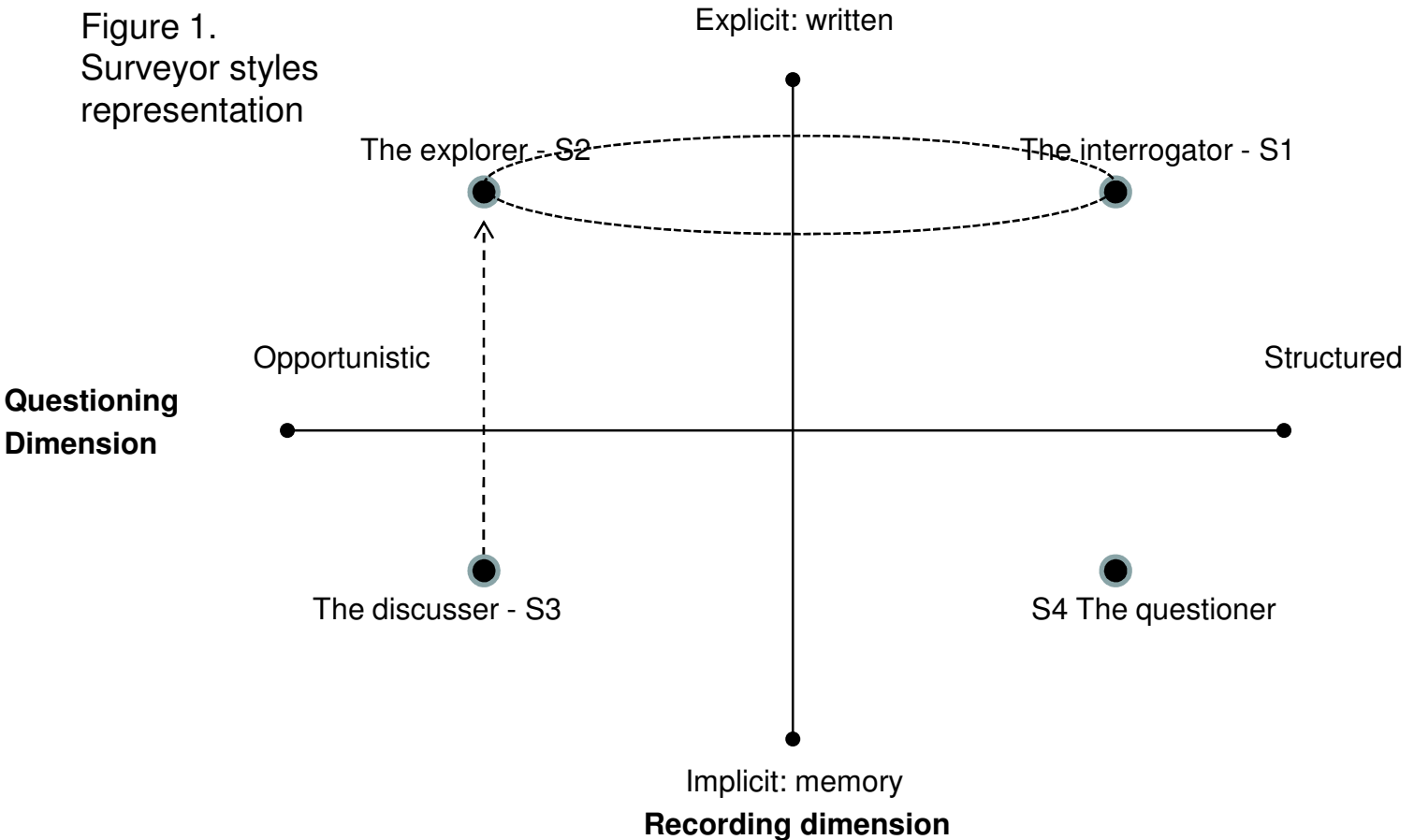


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# 5. Results

Figure 1.  
Surveyor styles  
representation



# 5. Results

A2: Do different survey teams make assessments consistent with each other?

Interact and reflect collectively as a team and across teams using scenarios

- Accreditation community of practice
- Exercise team assessments
- Developed workshop for surveyor training



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# 5. Results

## Improving reliability of an accreditation program: using research to educate and align practice.



David Greenfield,<sup>1</sup> Marjorie Pawsey,<sup>1,2</sup> Justine Naylor<sup>1</sup> and Jeffrey Braithwaite<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Centre for Clinical Governance Research, Faculty of Medicine, University of New South Wales

<sup>2</sup>Australian Council on Healthcare Standards



### AIMS

To assess the inter-rater reliability of accreditation survey teams.

### METHODS

An expert panel conducted a workshop to examine the reliability of judgments of three survey teams. The panel used the standards and framework of the Australian Council on Healthcare Standards Evaluation and Quality Improvement Program.

- Expert panel: experienced quality managers, surveyors and accreditation agency staff.
- Workshop comprised five scenarios: [two satisfactory and three unsatisfactory performance].
- Scenarios: an organisations' self-assessed rating, verification documentation and role play.

### RESULTS

Three sets of benefits were realised.

**1. The expert panel became an “accreditation community of practice”.** This small community furthered their individual learning and developed increased understanding among representatives from key accreditation stakeholder groups.

**2. The scenario exercise revealed a high level of reliability between the three survey teams.** In four of the five scenarios the teams matched the overall rating of the expert panel.

**3. The study developed an educational workshop for surveyors.** Participants experienced the format as engaging and the exercise as an effective collaborative learning forum. The materials produced, including the video recording of the workshop, established a cost effective educational tool for surveyors. Opportunities for distance learning with a large dispersed surveyor workforce have been enhanced with the development of this tool.

### CONCLUSIONS

The research study has been effective in educating and aligning the practice of participants from three survey teams.

The study demonstrated reliability between survey teams and developed an educational tool for future survey team training.

The research enhanced understanding of accreditation processes among key stakeholder groups.

#### Acknowledgements

The Centre for Clinical Governance Research conducted the research with industry partners the Australian Council on Healthcare Standards and Ramsay Health Care. The collaboration is the recipient of linkage research grant (LP0566737) funded by the Australian Research Council.

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# 5. Results

A3: How do survey teams survey and do different survey teams make assessments consistent with each other?

observe and reflect with colleagues – team and individuals - *in situ*



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# 5. Results

## Designing quality in accreditation programs by researching the reliability of survey teams: lessons learnt when things when awry



David Greenfield,<sup>1</sup> Marjorie Pawsey,<sup>1,2</sup> Justine Naylor,<sup>3</sup> Heather McDonald,<sup>2</sup> Jeffrey Braithwaite,<sup>1</sup>

<sup>1</sup>Centre for Clinical Governance Research, Australian Institute of Health Innovation, Faculty of Medicine, University of New South Wales, Australia

<sup>2</sup>Formerly: The Australian Council on Healthcare Standards, Sydney, Australia

<sup>3</sup>Sydney South west Area Health Service, Sydney, Australia

### Research context

This study is one component of a multi-method investigation of reliability of health care accreditation surveying. The research protocol<sup>1</sup> and findings from other studies are available in the literature<sup>2-5</sup>.

### Objective

This study aimed to investigate the inter-rater reliability of two accreditation teams simultaneously assessing a health organisation.

### Design

A case study with multi-method data collection: observations, interviews and document analysis.

### Setting and participants

A large public hospital in one of Australia's major cities. Participants were: hospital staff, accreditation agency staff and surveyors, and research staff. The organisation was undergoing an accreditation survey by the Australian Council on Healthcare Standards (ACHS).

### Findings

Thematic analysis identified three categories of issues: a shared understanding; difficulties enacting the protocol; and unforeseen and uncontrollable circumstances. See Table one.

The surveyors when faced with serious concerns about the organisation's ability to meet several standards opted to collaborate with their peers to ensure they understood evidence and interpreted standards according to current surveying norms. While they diverged from the agreed study protocol, they ensured an appropriate survey outcome.

### Acknowledgements

The Centre for Clinical Governance Research conducted the research in partnership with The Australian Council on Healthcare Standards. The collaboration is the recipient of linkage research grant LPXXXX funded by the Australian Research Council.

Table 1. Study findings: thematic responses by participant groups

Category	Issue	Participant group responses			
		Surveyors	Organisational staff	Accreditation agency	Research team
1. A shared understanding	Protocol established shared understanding and structure for the study	Agreed	Agreed	Agreed	Agreed
	Appropriate surveyors and matched survey teams	Agreed	Agreed	Agreed	---
	Survey conducted as per ACHS guidelines	Agreed	Agreed	Agreed	---
	Survey assessment outcome	Survey teams agreed on 16 of 19 mandatory criteria	Accepted survey findings and accreditation outcome	Endorsed survey team(s) assessment	---
2. Difficulties enacting the protocol	Interview protocol adhered to	Did not comply with alternative questioning	Did not provide documentation as expected	Yes	Did not complete observations as required
	Independent teams: non-collaboration regarding assessments	Collaboration in interview discussions No collaboration on ratings or recommendations	Collaboration in interview discussions	---	Observed collaboration
	Impact of study	Did not alter survey outcome	Perceived that they were "over scrutinised"	Did not alter survey outcome	Rethinking of study assumptions: the reliability of process and consistent application of standards are the outcomes to be pursued
3. Unforeseen and uncontrollable circumstances	Unforeseen	Surveyor replaced just prior to survey; person not fully cognisant with study protocol	Organisational accreditation coordinator replaced week prior to survey; person not fully cognizant with study protocol	---	Conflict within research team
	Uncontrollable	Surveyors observed to display nervousness about observation by colleagues	Organisational staff member inappropriately labelled survey teams, causing confusion	---	Conflict between researcher and surveyors

### Conclusions and implications

The study protocol may have been too ambitious. The study process highlighted the difficulty of conducting research *in situ*. The generalisability of the study was compromised by divergence from the agreed protocol and unforeseen and uncontrollable events.

The study challenged us to rethink our basic assumption that *reliability of outcome* is the right notion to be investigating. We came to the conclusion that, more accurately, the *reliability of process* and *consistent application of standards* are the outcomes to be pursued.

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# 5. Results

A4: Are individual surveyors consistent?  
individual reflection on scenarios

	Number of ratings N	EQulP rating consistent N	EQulP rating different N
Scenario #1: 1.5.2 infection control (mandatory criterion)	38	24	14
Scenario #2: 2.1.2 risk management (mandatory criterion)	38	20	18
Scenario #3: 2.2.3 continuing employment (non-mandatory criterion)	37 (1)	22	15
Totals	113 (100)	66 (58)	47 (42)



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# 5. Results: summary

- A1: reflect individually and with an external person  
*in situ*
- A2: interact and reflect collectively as a team and  
across teams using scenarios
- A3: observe and reflect with colleagues – team  
and individuals - *in situ*
- A4: individual reflection on scenarios



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# 5. Results

Surveyors reported, they valued having the opportunity to learn from their colleagues, and with an independent person, through exercises and when conducting surveys.

It is important to have the opportunity to: observe, listen, discuss, analyse and reflect *collectively and individually*.



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# 6. Discussion

- Two themes common to all activities:
  1. Peer-learning, and
  2. Reflection-in-practice (Schon 1983)
- Different strategies in different environments valued: complementary options for knowledge development.



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# 6. Discussion

Different activities individually and collectively promoted surveyor professional development and contributed to reliability in surveying.

That is, surveyors had a range of opportunities to learn, and contribute to others learning, the norms of surveying practice.



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# 7. Conclusion

Accreditation agencies need to take active steps to ensure their credibility.

One such step, is providing their surveyor workforce with a range of activities for professional development.

The activities described here offer some suggestions. A challenge for accreditation agencies is how these, and/or others, can be implemented both financially and practically in the longer term.



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