B-EAGER

A Bowen therapy and oncology massage research capacity building initiative: improving quality of care, professionalism and future integration in health care.

Effective clinical practice and health service delivery are guided by research evidence[1]. Health care professionals in mainstream and complementary clinical settings need context-specific evidence to inform effective treatment approaches, improve the health of their patients and substantiate claims about the safety and efficacy of their treatments.

The lack of research evidence in Bowen therapy, and current research in oncology massage, has implications for quality improvement, patient choice in treatment options, substantiating treatment efficacy and profession sustainability. It is also a barrier to practitioner engagement in integrated clinical care teams and service delivery settings.

Our dilemma...

Despite a commitment to increasing the research evidence base, the Bowen therapy and oncology massage professions lack the capability to engage effectively in this type of activity. Major factors impacting the ability to solve this dilemma are inadequate practitioner research literacy, as well as insufficient practitioner and organisational infrastructure and leadership.

How did we move forward?

As a first step, the Bowen therapy associations (i.e. Bowen Therapy Federation of Australasia (BTFA) and Bowen Association Australia (BAA)) recognised the importance of addressing these inadequacies, in particular developing leadership in research capacity building (RCB), an essential requirement in effective RCB, Fredua-Kwarteng[2].

In 2019/20 the BTFA invested in a three-year partnership with the Australian Research Consortium for Complementary and Integrative Medicine (ARCCIM). This involved sponsoring two BTFA practitioners, Barbara Beacham (Bowen therapist and retired research associate) and Eleanor Oyston (Bowen therapist and oncology massage practitioner) to participate in the ARCCIM Complementary and Integrated Medicine International Research Capacity Building Leadership Program.

The leadership and academic support required to develop the B-EAGER Initiative were cultivated through this program. The ARCCIM partnership provided a link to academia for our professions, with its associated research expertise and infrastructure. It also provided an opportunity to engage in thought leadership, networking and strategising. This enabled the process of RCB in Bowen therapy and oncology massage to begin.

How was B-EAGER established?

In 2024 the BTFA hosted a face-to-face RCB Strategic Planning workshop in Hahndorf, South Australia. This was facilitated by Professor Amie Steel and participants included the two ARCCIM RCB Leadership Fellows, representatives from the National Bowen therapy associations; BTFA and BAA, and four Bowen therapy and oncology massage training organisations: Bowen Training Australia (BTA), Fascial Kinetics (FK), oncology massage Training Ltd (OMTL) and oncology massage Global (OMG). Representatives from Massage & Myotherapy Australia were also in attendance.

The outcome of this workshop was the formation of the Bowen therapy and oncology massage B-EAGER RCB Steering Collaboration. Since August 2024 the Steering Collaboration has met monthly, establishing governance arrangements and developing communication, education and implementation action plans.

In June 2025 the first stage of the B-EAGER Initiative was launched. Membership of the Steering Collaboration continues to expand, with Bowen Therapy New Zealand (BTNZ) joining the

What is Research Capacity Building (RCB)?

RCB is defined as a continuous process of developing sustainable abilities and skills enabling individuals and organisations to perform high quality research, Cook[3].

The goal of research capacity building is described as activity that complements the health professional's existing clinical expertise with research skills, Hulcombe et.al.[4].

Underpinning effective RCB processes are the interrelated elements of effective leadership, capacity-building through context-relevant education and training, funding, incentives and informed action through appropriate partnerships and collaboration, and development of research-related organisational infrastructure[2,5].

original founding members in late 2025. The Initiative is now attracting national and international attention, with watchful interest from practitioners around Australia and in several overseas locations including: the United States, United Kingdom, Asia and the Netherlands.

What is B-EAGER about?

The Initiative is a collaborative venture to bring about change by building research capacity supporting a stronger, evidence-informed future for practitioners in the Bowen therapy and oncology massage professions. By enabling practitioner engagement and organisational development, B-EAGER aims to establish enduring skills, infrastructure and partnerships that embed RCB activity and a research culture in our professions.

The B-EAGER Mission is to: *Lead the development and implementation of collaborative efforts to grow research capacity and quality improvement across our organisations and workforce.*

Our Vision, over a 10-year period, is to: *Develop evidence and research that can be used to promote quality improvement and increased integration of Bowen therapy and oncology massage in healthcare settings, leading to increased patient volume for qualified practitioners.*

The Vision will be achieved by:

- Strengthening organisational and individual research capacity and capability
- Establishing a strong, practice-based research culture
- Promoting the routine use of Patient Reported Outcome Measures (PROMs)
- Elevating the professionalism of our workforce
- Gaining greater recognition among healthcare providers, policy makers and consumers.

The Initiative uses a 'priority-driven' approach to research activity in clinical settings. This type of approach maximises the benefit of investment in research and capacity building by focusing action on areas of strategic importance[6]. B-EAGER therefore centres on collecting information across several areas of health identified as National Health Priorities. These areas are also among conditions commonly treated by our practitioners[7].

The research priority areas for Bowen therapy include:

- Arthritis management
- Depression from chronic pain
- Lower back pain
- Headaches and migraines, including concussion management
- Mental health, wellbeing and function.

The research priority areas for oncology massage include:

- Pain management
- Anxiety and wellbeing management
- Sleep management.

To optimise outcomes, the Initiative is co-designed with our academic partner ARCCIM. This ensures activity will be academically rigorous whilst meeting the specific capacity and development needs of our practitioner workforce. The B-EAGER methods aim to provide simple, accessible pathways to developing research capacity for practitioners with limited or no prior research knowledge or skills. Information collection will be cost-effective for practitioners to implement, requiring minimal infrastructure investment in the clinical setting. Ongoing support for engagement and implementation will also be provided.

B-EAGER will use a suite of validated PROMs to collect information on patient experiences of health and wellbeing in the priority areas. Over time, this will enable us to build evidence about the contribution of our treatments to these conditions across many aspects of a patient's health, including management of pain, health related quality of life, physical function, headaches and migraines, sleep, anxiety, stress, and pain related depression.

What does B-EAGER mean for Practitioners?

The Initiative is an opportunity for practitioners to be a part of the change they want to see in their profession. Far-reaching engagement is critical to the success of the B-EAGER Initiative.

The first Stage of the Initiative (see Fig. 1), involving completion of the four-part Pre-Implementation Webinar Series and training in using one simple PROM (a pain scale), offers exciting professional development and quality improvement opportunities for practitioners, and supports professionalisation of our workforce.

According to the Australian Commission on Safety and Quality in Health Care[8] information from PROMs has three broad

What are Patient Reported Outcome Measures (PROMs)?

PROMs capture a patient's perception of their own health through questionnaires[8,9].

PROMs were selected as the most appropriate and affordable RCB and information collection tools, because of their usefulness in the clinical setting[9], and potential for broad application through practitioner engagement.

Our founding members

purposes or benefits for practitioners, their patients and the health system more widely. These include: i) enhancing clinician-patient interactions, ii) comparing the effects of different treatments and understanding variation among healthcare providers and iii) population surveillance and informing policy[8].

Other more specific benefits include:

- Highlighting the patient's experience of their care and their preferences
- Monitoring the outcomes of clinical conditions and their effects on health and wellbeing
- Informing training and quality improvement in healthcare delivery
- Comparing processes and outcomes against industry standards.

What's next?

As indicated above, training in using the B-EAGER PROMs, and how to report the information collected, is being rolled out in a staged approach. The elements of each stage are outlined in Figure 1 below:

By supporting practitioner capacity development to use PROMs as quality improvement and research tools, engaging in case reporting, and through academic partnerships and organisational development, we are creating space for real-world insights to be translated into credible, publishable research. Over time, this will contribute to building practice-relevant research in our professions, an important element in high quality health service delivery[10].

How do you learn more?

Visit the B-EAGER website at www.b-eager.org.au or email us at info@b-eager.org.au. To stay informed go to the 'get involved' section on the website and click on the link to register for our email updates and quarterly e-Bulletin.

Working together, we grow stronger in how we deliver care. Growing evidence is a promise for the future of Bowen therapy and oncology massage.
B-EAGER Initiative
www.b-eager.org.au

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Stage 1 – 2025-26

The four-part B-EAGER Pre-Implementation Webinar Series (2025–26) will equip practitioners with essential knowledge of PROMs, patient engagement, and practical skills to assess pain and its impact on activity.

Edited webinars are available online and will ultimately form a foundational training package for students and ongoing professional development.

Stage 2 – 2027

From 2027 advanced training in using three more complex PROMs will be available.

These PROMs support information collection about the effects of treatments on patients' management of back pain, headaches and aspects of mental health and overall wellbeing.

Stage 3 – 2028

From 2028 support will be provided for interested and appropriately skilled practitioners to develop Case Reports based on PROMs information: potentially through short courses, practice-based research groups and internships.

These activities will offer coordinated guidance and peer-support so that Case Reports can become credible evidence into the future.

Stage 4 – 2029 and beyond

From 2029 and beyond, strategies supporting knowledge diffusion and sharing of results will be implemented, ensuring the results from PROMs research are widely broadcast to practitioners, the public and other professional groups in the health care system.

Figure 1 – Stages of the B-EAGER PROMs roll-out – 2025 to 2029 and beyond

Barbara Beacham

Barbara is a Bowen Therapist who holds a Bachelor of Social Science and Masters of Community Development and Management. Barbara is a Fellow of the ARCCIM International Complementary & Integrative Medicine Research Leadership & Capacity Building Program (2019-2023). She is currently a member of the Bowen Therapy Federation of Australasia and the Inaugural Chair of the B-EAGER Research Capacity Building Steering Collaboration. Barbara is a Commonwealth PHCRED Scholarship recipient (1999-2000) and has worked in the fields of Australian General Practice research capacity building and Aboriginal health systems and services research and evaluation.

Amie Steel

Amie is a Professor in Public Health and Co-Director of the Australian Research Consortium in Complementary and Integrative Medicine at Southern Cross University. She is also an Australian Research Council Future Fellow and currently serves as the research lead for the World Health Organization's Global Research Priority Setting Exercise in Traditional, Complementary and Integrative Medicine (TCIM).

Jon Adams

Jon is a Distinguished Professor of Public Health and Deputy Head of School (Research) at the School of Public Health, UTS. Jon was awarded a prestigious Fulbright Senior Scholarship (Fulbright Commission, 2019-2020) and is one of the few Australian researchers to have held three consecutive highly competitive National Health and Medical Research Council and Australian Research Council Research Fellowships (2007-2019). Jon is the founding Director of the Australian Research Consortium in Complementary and Integrative Medicine.

▶ *Full reference list available in the online version of this article.*