

NSW rural and remote nursing grand rounds via videoconference

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Jenny Preece is based at Dorrigo Multipurpose Service and has been a community health clinical nurse specialist in a small rural farming community for 20 years. She has extensive experience working in small rural communities and has a passion for health promotion and capacity building within communities to maximise health and wellbeing. As a rural sole practitioner she has a genuine understanding of the professional and geographical isolation issues that impact on rural clinicians.

In 2000, Jenny won a NSW Baxter Health Award for bringing Farm Safety to the focus through a school based field day and in 2005 Jenny won another Baxter Health Award for community participation, which saw the Dorrigo Community become more physically active and shed 750 kg to combat chronic diseases.

Jenny has brought her experiences with her to the Rural Division of the Clinical Education and Training Institute; formerly known as NSW Institute of Rural Clinical Services and teaching working as a rural and remote health project officer to continue capacity building and creating supportive networks within the rural and remote workforce across rural and remote NSW.

In 2008, NSW Health identified mentoring and supervision of rural and remote nursing staff from smaller facilities across NSW as an area to be addressed, particularly where staffing ratios are small and triaging for initial emergency management of patients is frequently undertaken in the absence of a medical officer. It was agreed that 'Rural and Remote Nursing Grand Rounds via Videoconference' would be a highly visual method of linking rural and remote nurses on a regular basis; for generalist case presentations and discussion of interesting or challenging patient journeys of relevance in the rural setting. One of the longer term potential outcomes would be the generation of a peer review and mentoring network amongst the smaller facilities.

In 2009, The NSW Institute of Rural Clinical Services and Teaching (IRCST) established nursing grand rounds via videoconference linking rural and remote nurses from eight North Coast Area Health Service (NCAHS) isolated health facilities every month. Over a 'trial' period the operational framework was consolidated as an *Implementation Toolkit*, a 'how to do it guide' to enable the further establishment of nursing grand rounds across NSW.

Sites are rostered on a monthly basis to present a patient journey of relevance to nursing staff at smaller sites for discussion, with guest speakers invited to present a case based inservice at regular intervals on the roster to enhance the educational component of the program. Presentations can involve the use of a PowerPoint presentation or simply tell the patient story.

Keeping the sessions case oriented; a rural patient's story told by rural nurses ensures that case discussions are relevant and meaningful. Evaluation of NCAHS nursing grand rounds at 12 months demonstrated that the program has generated an accepted form of peer review using reflection on team and individual clinical practice to identify 'lessons learnt' from the episode of care, as was intended. In many cases discussions have influenced change in clinical practice and regular communications have created a mentor network between the smaller sites. Isolated rural nurses are now more comfortable with the use of videoconferencing and the sharing and analysis of experiences with geographically and professionally isolated colleagues and comment they now feel part of an 'extended' team.

'Rural and Remote Nursing Grand Rounds via Videoconference' has now expanded to include smaller sites across Greater Western Area Health Service (GWAHS) and Greater Southern Area Health Service (GSAHS) for regular generalist case presentations with HNEAHS proposing to implement the program in 2011.

Recommendation

NSW Area Health Services support better utilisation of videoconference technology for clinical education and professional networking support for rural and remote nurses working in isolation.