Growing the rural Allied Health workforce through immersion placements

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BACKGROUND

• Commonwealth funded Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training (RHMT) program
  – University Department of Rural Health & Rural Clinical School

• Providing effective rural training experiences for health students
• Build health workforce capacity in rural and remote areas
SETTLENG

• The University of Newcastle Department of Rural Health (UONDRH) offers
  – short-term and long-term, rural immersion placement experiences
  – across allied health, medicine and nursing students

• Students live and study together in a multi-disciplinary environment
  – interprofessional learning and community engagement in a rural context
PLACEMENT AREAS

Hunter New England and Mid North Coast Local Health Districts
IMMERSION PLACEMENT

Immersion option consists of:
• Compulsory and elective placements
• Completion of coursework with local academic support
• Honours projects – rural research focus
• Supported service-based learning
• Simulated learning opportunities

Involvement in extra-curricular activities:
• Interprofessional activities – camp, modules
• Community Engagement Program activities
• Cultural Awareness and On-Country Tours
• Opportunities for continuing professional development
IMMERSION PLACEMENT

- Service Learning placement
- Community placement & Research
- Food Service placement
- Simulation placement
- On Country Visits
- Clinical placement
IMMERSION PLACEMENT

Allied Health Camps

Community Engagement

Orientation Activities

Interprofessional modules

Promotion activities

Community Engagement
AIM

To track the employment outcomes of UON allied health students undertaking short and long-term rural immersion placements.
METHODOLOGY

• Longitudinal, mixed-methods study
• Allied health students participating in short and long-term, immersion placement experiences at UONDRH sites in the disciplines of:
  – Diagnostic Radiography
  – Nuclear Medicine
  – Nutrition and Dietetics
  – Occupational Therapy
  – Physiotherapy
  – Radiation Therapy
  – Speech Pathology
Students are invited to participate in one or more components of the study. These include:

i. End of placement survey
   Short and long term students

ii. Semi-structured interview
    Long term students

iii. 1, 3 & 5 Year Follow-up surveys*
    Short and long term students

*based on Rural Allied Health Workforce Survey¹
METHOD – DATA COLLECTED

(i) End of placement survey
- Rural/urban background
- Satisfaction with placement
- Consideration of rural work

(ii) Semi-structured interview
- Rural placement experience
- Influence of rural placement on career plans

(iii) 1, 3 & 5 year follow-up surveys
- Employment and position data
- Placement influence on workplace choice
- Reasons for staying or leaving
REMOTELESS CLASSIFICATION

Australian Standard Geographical Classification - Remoteness Area
RA1 – Major cities
RA2 – Inner Regional
RA3 – Outer Regional
RA4 – Remote
RA5 – Very Remote
RESULTS

Completed follow-up graduate surveys at:
- 1 year response rate 53%
- 3 year response rate 44%

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Position data</th>
<th>1 year</th>
<th>3 years</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Employed in profession</td>
<td>86%</td>
<td>91.7%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Salaried</td>
<td>74.4%</td>
<td>62.5%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Full-time</td>
<td>65.1%</td>
<td>58.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Temporary role</td>
<td>46.5%</td>
<td>33.3%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Self-employed</td>
<td>6.2%</td>
<td>4.2%</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Sole practice – always/often</td>
<td>15%</td>
<td>16.6%</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
RESULTS

Follow-up surveys

• Proportion of graduates working rural or remote (RA2-RA5)……..

1 year
82 graduates (49%)

3 years
21 graduates (35%)

At 1 year: 32% of those based RA2-RA5 indicated ‘no plans to leave their current position’

At 3 years: 62%
RESULTS

Of those employed in a rural or remote location at........

1 year
57 (70%) were from a rural background

3 years
10 (48%) were from a rural background
Previous findings...

- **Rural origin** was a significant factor in choosing a rural work location after graduation \((p = 0.030)^2\)

- **Rural placement experience** also had a significant influence \((p = 0.01)\) on graduates’ decision to consider entering rural practice^2
Students from a rural or remote background were 2.35 times more likely to be located in a rural or remote workplace at one year than graduates from a urban background (95%CI 1.056-5.229).³

Graduates of urban origin who chose a rural workplace location were 3.938 times (95%CI 1.573–9.854) more likely to have been influenced by their rural placement experience than those who undertook work in a urban location.³
## REASONS FOR PLANNING TO LEAVE

Table 2: Reasons given for planning to leave – *multiple responses given*

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for leaving</th>
<th>Rural based n=67</th>
<th>Urban based n=42</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Highest response</td>
<td>-Better career prospects (30.9%)</td>
<td>-Moving to a preferred location (38.1%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>2nd highest response</td>
<td>-Moving to a preferred location (29.4%)</td>
<td>-Better career prospects (26.2%)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>3rd highest response</td>
<td>-Contract or temporary position (19.1%)</td>
<td>-Never intended to stay</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-To earn a better income</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td></td>
<td>-Relocation of partner (each 21.4%)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
REASONS FOR PLANNING TO LEAVE

…currently only have another six months on my contract. I would stay longer if the position were to be extended.
   - rural/remote based, dietetics, plan to relocate in 2 years

…..my position is for a fixed period of 12 months, however if I was to be offered a full-time position I would accept and would then have no plans to leave.
   - rural/remote based, nuclear scientist, plan to relocate in 2 years
REASONS FOR PLANNING TO LEAVE

I will move closer to my partner at some stage as they seek different employment opportunities, but I am hoping to stay working regionally or rurally.

- rural/remote based, physiotherapy, plan to relocate in 2 years

I thoroughly enjoy my current job, however at the moment I see myself returning to a more rural area down the track to raise a family.

- metropolitan based, dietetics, plan relocate in 5 years
DISCUSSION

• First study to track allied health workforce outcomes from RHMT – UDRH program over 1 - 5 years

• Positive short-term rural workforce outcomes are favourable (50%) compared to UON Australian Graduate Survey data (2011-15): 23.7% working rural or remote

• Work availability, career aspirations and personal commitments contributing to trends in work locations in first three years after graduation
DISCUSSION

Limitations

• Limited data for 3-5 year follow-up
• Study participants may be more positive towards rural practice

Future research

• Seeking further data from publically available sources to track graduate outcomes
CONCLUSIONS

• This study provides insights into the influence of rural placements on future workplace location and the external factors that impact on allied health graduate intention to leave rural or urban areas.

• Ongoing support of rural placements for students from rural and urban backgrounds will continue to help address rural allied health workforce shortages.

• Ongoing longitudinal data is required to determine the longer term workforce outcomes and barriers to retention.
REFERENCES


