



MEDIA RELEASE

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Good health and wellbeing in rural and remote Australia.

Answers to rural and remote health service challenges on several fronts

The latest issue of *The Australian Journal of Rural Health* reports on a number of studies that detail health service challenges in rural and remote Australia - with useful insights for policy makers and administrators across a range of topics.

In a study of Indigenous patients in the Kimberley, Julia Marley and others found that while peritoneal dialysis can provide some patients with valuable therapy close to home, it is not suitable for all patients. The study results support the need for the continuing roll-out of haemodialysis options. Also in the Kimberley, Carole Reeve and colleagues provide compelling evidence to suggest that the implementation of an ear health program has improved ear health considerably in the Fitzroy Valley.

Travelling to a city hospital is a barrier for all patients who live in more remote areas, but for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people it is a particularly serious challenge. Janet Kelly and others conclude that if equitable access to specialist services for rural Indigenous patients is to be achieved, improved health-related transport is needed, with better coordination of appointments and flexibility to accommodate late arrivals in city hospitals.

Emma Quinn and others report on their study of progress in delivering the recommendations of the National Maternity Services Plan in remote NSW. Their report acknowledges some gaps in comparison to national best practice frameworks and they suggest areas for further investigation. Frances Doran and Julie Hornibrook report the results of an exploratory study of women's experiences in seeking an abortion in rural NSW where they are not available locally. Their findings indicate that rural women experience multiple barriers in relation to access to abortion services and follow-up care, with impacts on overall health outcomes.

In a major review of utilisation rates by women aged 40-45 years of mental health services under the Better Access Scheme (BAS), Xenia Dolja-Gore and others report that a higher proportion of women in major cities have accessed BAS services than rural women, with registered psychologists being the most commonly used BAS providers for women in major cities. Robyn Adams and others examine factors affecting the availability of physiotherapy, identifying some of the differences between public and private sector access.

In his Editorial, David Perkins ponders the impact of recent Budget decisions on Medicare - one of the pillars of the Australian health system. And in a companion editorial Deputy Editor Erica Bell outlines new approaches by the Journal to enhance the profile of qualitative research papers published in AJRH.

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