

Title: Developing a rural and remote Queensland GP workforce – does a rural pathway matter?

Introduction: James Cook University (JCU) recently strengthened its vertically integrated training pipeline by establishing Generalist Medical Training (GMT), a regional General Practice (GP) training organisation aiming to build a rural/remote medical workforce for regional, rural and remote Queensland. GMT aims to recruit medical graduates who are resilient, adventurous and with the skills and desire to make a difference in their communities.

Objectives: This study explored whether identification of registrars' previous rural training and current educational environment assists in developing a community-focussed, rural and remote GP workforce.

Method: Surveys were administered to all GP registrars at entry, during training, and at exit (Fellowship) to analyse their characteristics, attitudes, 5-year intentions and training location with respect to rural practice.

Results: Baseline data found 39% of the 276 GMT registrars surveyed at entry intended to serve in rural/remote Queensland locations (MMM 3-7) in 5 years time. Current JCU GP trainees with an Australian Rural Clinical School (RCS) background were more likely to intend to practise in rural and remote areas than graduates whom had not attended a RCS ($p=0.001$). At Fellowship, the proportion of Fellows with no RCS background intending to practice in rural/remote communities in 5 years time increased such that there was no significant difference to that of the proportion of Fellows with a RCS background.

Conclusion: Selecting non-RCS graduates with an interest in rural/remote medicine and providing them with positive rural and remote training experiences is just as important for future rural practice as providing a rural pathway for RCS graduates. JCU is achieving its workforce mission by recruiting medical graduates with an interest in rural practice, not just previous rural training, which when combined with excellent educational experiences, fosters the development of competent GPs with a desire to address the health needs of regional, rural and remote Queensland communities.

Presentation Type: Academic Paper

Theme: Research in Policy and Practice

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Presenters Bio:

A/Prof Carole Reeve is a Deputy Director for GMT at the College of Medicine and Dentistry, James Cook University. She has specialist medical qualifications in general practice, rural and remote medicine and public health. She has more than 10 years' experience in undergraduate and post graduate medicine education and has completed a PhD in health systems research translation and evaluation. More recently she has been involved in the impact evaluation of socially accountable medical education for Training for Health Equity in the Philippines.