

Understanding current workforce attractors for GP registrars and supervisors

Ensuring an equitably distributed and sustainable rural medical workforce remain critical challenges for the Australian health system, with many rural and remote communities continuing to struggle to attract and retain GPs.

This study aimed to identify aspects of GP training in north-west Queensland which attract rural/remote registrars and their supervisors. A modified survey based on the adapted Critical Access Hospital Community Apgar Questionnaire (Terry et al, 2016) was used to collect data about perceptions of rural GP training and supervision. Open-ended survey questions were used to gather additional information about training and supervision experiences. Data analysis (in SPSS) of the 163 complete entries included descriptive statistics and non-parametric tests (Mann-Whitney U and Kruskal-Wallis) to determine statistical significant differences in attractiveness ratings between participant groups. Qualitative data were analysed in Nvivo, using a thematic analysis approach.

The respondents comprised 43% registrars and 57% supervisors. The highest rated factor of attractiveness was Medical Quality (3.63) and the lowest was Scope of Practice (2.74). Participants from major cities were more attracted to geographic factors than those from rural and remote locations. Thematic analysis of the open ended questions confirmed the quantitative results with medical quality and inter-personal relationships been the most important attracting factors, while financial incentives was least important.

The modified Community Apgar Questionnaire used in this study may serve as a useful tool for identifying the most important attracting factors to the rural and remote GP workforce. One key factor - the importance of quality medical practice, emerged as the most significant attractor. This factor has not been identified previously in the literature and therefore warrants further exploration in order to enhance attraction and retention of the rural and remote GP workforce.