

Pharmacist Orientation to Rural and Remote Practice: How are we doing?

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BACKGROUND

Introducing pharmacy students to rural and remote practice is one of the strategies developed by universities to address the deficit of rural practitioners. A rural and remote elective is offered to JCU pharmacy students in Mount Isa and Katherine. Part of this program required students to utilise this experience to present how they as pharmacists would prefer to be oriented to rural and remote practice

METHODS

Information was gathered from the four students using narrative techniques, with their journals describing both personal and professional experiences. Content Analysis was then applied to the data, using the Social Representation Theory. Students were also required to generate an orientation brochure, appropriate for a pharmacist commencing employment in a rural and remote location.

RESULTS

Data collected provided consistent information, with major themes around cultural diversity and awareness, including Indigenous healthcare, opportunities, multidisciplinary involvement and surrounding areas, all being seen as key to the successful orientation of a pharmacist for rural and remote practice. Orientation brochures designed, will be presented.

DISCUSSION

The rural elective program encouraged the pharmacy students to engage in community activities and as such, this model strengthens the relationships for collaboration in the community, which fosters potential for multidisciplinary healthcare. In addition they were supported in stepping out of the traditional practice, which informed their presentation of what would constitute an effective orientation for a rural pharmacist. This exercise, clearly indicating that we are not doing well, highlights the need for more effective orientation for pharmacists in rural and remote practice.