INVESTIGATING STRATEGIES TO PREPARE
EARLY POSTGRADUATE DOCTORS
FOR PRACTICE IN RURAL AND REMOTE
COMMUNITIES

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March 2010
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# LIST OF ACRONYMS

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Acronym</th>
<th>Full Form</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>ACRRM</td>
<td>Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ALSO</td>
<td>Advanced Life Support in Obstetrics</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>AMC</td>
<td>Australian Medical Council Incorporated</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>APLS</td>
<td>Advanced Paediatric Life Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ARP</td>
<td>Academic Rural Practitioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CD</td>
<td>Compact Disk</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>CPMEC</td>
<td>Confederation of Postgraduate Medical Education Councils</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>DCT</td>
<td>Director of Clinical Training</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ED</td>
<td>Emergency Department</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>ELS</td>
<td>Emergency Life Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>EMST</td>
<td>Early Management of Severe Trauma</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>HECS</td>
<td>Higher Education Contribution Scheme</td>
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<tr>
<td>HMO</td>
<td>House Medical Officer or junior doctor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JCU</td>
<td>James Cook University</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JD</td>
<td>Junior Doctor</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>JFSS</td>
<td>John Flynn Scholarship Scheme</td>
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<tr>
<td>MA</td>
<td>Medical Administrator</td>
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<tr>
<td>MEO</td>
<td>Medical Education Officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MSRPP</td>
<td>Medical Superintendent with Right to Private Practice</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>MTRP</td>
<td>Medical Training Review Panel</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PGPPP</td>
<td>Postgraduate General Practice Placements Program</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PGY1</td>
<td>Postgraduate year one or internship</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PGY2</td>
<td>Postgraduate year two or junior house officer</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PGY3</td>
<td>Postgraduate year three</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PHTLS</td>
<td>Pre-Hospital Trauma Life Support</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMC</td>
<td>Postgraduate Medical Council</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>PMEFQ</td>
<td>Postgraduate Medical Education Foundation of Queensland</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QHRSS</td>
<td>Queensland Health Rural Scholarship Scheme</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QMEC</td>
<td>Queensland Medical Education Committee</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>QRMSA</td>
<td>Queensland Rural Medical Support Agency</td>
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<tr>
<td>RAMUS</td>
<td>Remote Area Medical Undergraduate Student</td>
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<tr>
<td>RFDS</td>
<td>Royal Flying Doctors Service</td>
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<tr>
<td>RP</td>
<td>Rural Practitioner</td>
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<tr>
<td>RRAPP</td>
<td>Rural and Remote Area Placement Program</td>
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<tr>
<td>RRMA</td>
<td>Rural, Remote, Metropolitan Area Classification System</td>
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SUMMARY

In Queensland, workforce shortages have resulted in early postgraduate doctors, or junior doctors, being required to work in rural and remote communities including in solo doctor practices. These junior doctors faced a range of barriers and difficulties. The workforce issues were unlikely to be solved in the short term. This situation prompted this research which investigated what strategies would prepare early postgraduate doctors effectively for practice in rural and remote communities.

The study was conducted in three phases. Phase one was exploratory and data collected were used to explore the issues that were impacting currently upon junior doctors practising in rural and remote practice. Core competencies and strategies through which to pursue these issues were also identified.

In phase two the Supporting Junior Doctors Going Bush Program was developed. The program aimed to assist junior doctors in their preparation for practice in rural and remote communities and to minimise the difficulties faced. Four strategies were devised. The strategies were to:
1. facilitate appropriate term allocations (where possible);
2. provide ongoing education activities;
3. promote attendance at courses; and
4. provide orientation for those undertaking rural practice.

Phase three was the trial of the program. Kirkpatrick’s model was used to guide evaluation. Case study methodology was appropriate to investigate and evaluate the feasibility and impact of the program in four teaching hospitals. Two of these hospitals were located in rural areas, one in a remote area and one in a semi-metropolitan area.

The strategies were able to be implemented to a reasonable degree at the four sites. Process evaluation revealed that most aspects of the strategies were feasible. There were some barriers that influenced feasibility, in particular the
strategies focusing on education and course participation. The barriers were related to workforce issues. Lack of a full complement in staffing at the senior and junior levels impacted on the complete implementation. The orientation strategy was not well implemented in any of the three hospitals where junior doctors were required to undertake rural practice, although junior doctors reported they did not need any further orientation.

Junior doctors from the two rural hospitals and the remote hospital perceived they were prepared for practice in rural and remote communities. Fewer of the doctors in the semi-metropolitan facility felt confident. The strategy that was most effective in preparing junior doctors for rural and remote practice was exposure to a broad range of clinical experiences. These experiences were able to be facilitated best at the two rural hospitals. While junior doctors from one rural facility had been required to undertake rural practice in their second postgraduate year, doctors from the other had been able to spend this year solely on preparation for future practice. Participation in skills and procedural courses complemented clinical practice and enabled participants to gain hands on experience and practise procedural skills. Courses facilitated the improvement of participants' confidence and those addressing the development of emergency skills were noted as the most beneficial.

The Supporting Junior Doctors Going Bush Program raised the profile of rural practice and provided direction for hospital educators to assist their junior doctors with relevant preparatory activities. The program itself did not have any significant influence on rural recruitment or retention. However, rural experiences in the second postgraduate year were impacting on intentions to fulfill obligations of the rural scholarship scheme which was held by junior doctors in the study. The State Health Department, which is responsible for workforce training and retention, needs to ensure training is made a priority within hospitals and provide sufficient funding and resources to support activities. A model was outlined that could assist future junior doctors in their preparation. Any future rural programs need to be better promoted and resourced.
DECLARATION

I certify that this thesis does not incorporate without acknowledgement any material previously submitted for a degree or diploma in any university;

and to the best of my knowledge and belief it does not contain any material previously published or written by another person except where due reference is made in the text.

________________________________________
Deborah May Smith

March 2010
ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

I would like to acknowledge my principal supervisor Professor David Prideaux for his encouragement, advice and guidance in the development and undertaking of this research. Without his support this study would not have been possible. In addition, I would like to thank my co-supervisors Professor Craig Veitch, Professor Paul Worley and Associate Professor Dennis Pashen, for their advice and support.

This study would not have been possible without the support of staff within the Health Advisory Unit, Queensland Health. In particular I would like to express gratitude to Dr Michael Catchpole, Dr Denis Lennox and Dr Sue Huxley for supporting this study and facilitating access to key personnel.

The implementation of the study was made significantly easier with the provision of resources from the Postgraduate Medical Education Foundation of Queensland. Professor Peter Roeser, Jennifer Willett, Sue Hoy and Kerry Doblo provided information and access to Internet space through which the program resources were accessible. I have received a great deal of support from the Medical Education Officers and Directors of Clinical Training within the Queensland teaching hospitals, in particular those at the four case study hospitals involved in the trial and evaluation of the program. Their assistance was extremely valuable and I thank them for their time and effort taken to participate in the activities of the program.

I would also like to thank my friends and colleagues at the Mount Isa Centre for Rural and Remote Health for assisting me with various aspects of this study. In particular I acknowledge Dr Penny Hutchinson, Dr Aaron Hollins and Dr Nigel Brown, for providing medical advice in the program development; Jane Hollins and Michelle Lee, for undertaking mail-outs and transcription; and Sue Foster for assisting in the development of the website materials. I also thank Gillian Jenkins and Rachael Dettling for proofreading the thesis in the final stages.
I acknowledge and thank Dr Teresa O’Connor who recognised my potential in the early days and whose encouragement and support has helped me enormously.

Finally, to my family and friends - your encouragement, support and patience has enabled me to sustain the motivation and enthusiasm to undertake and complete this challenge.