

Should I stay or should I go?

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Context

Retention issues are expensive for rural health services, they impact on the quality of services provided and they reduce continuity of care for consumers.

Research questions

1. What is the experience of early career allied health professionals working in rural areas?
2. Can a rural generalist training pathway improve this experience, retention and the quality of services provided?

Research design

- 4 phases 2019-2021
- Mixed methods
- Qualitative - experiences, perceptions, demographics, intentions to stay, benefits, challenges, enablers and barriers
- Quantitative - costs, benefits, confidence, competence, retention, satisfaction, traits

Impact of this research

- Collaborative partnership between SA Health and Flinders University
- Evidence for retention of allied health in rural areas
- Exploring where, when for whom the rural generalist pathway is an effective strategy.
- Understanding the SA context and implications for workforce planning



Results – Experience of early career clinicians

- ✓ Developing problem solving skills, flexible thinking
- ✓ Good access to clinical support and training
- ✓ Warm, welcoming teams
- ✓ Opportunities for career advancement, autonomy

“Adelaide was never for me, I think. All my family, my friends, everyone that I kind of grew up with are all here so for me it was always probably going to be that I’d come back here, regardless of whether I was with my partner or not. I think I’m just more suited to country lifestyle.”

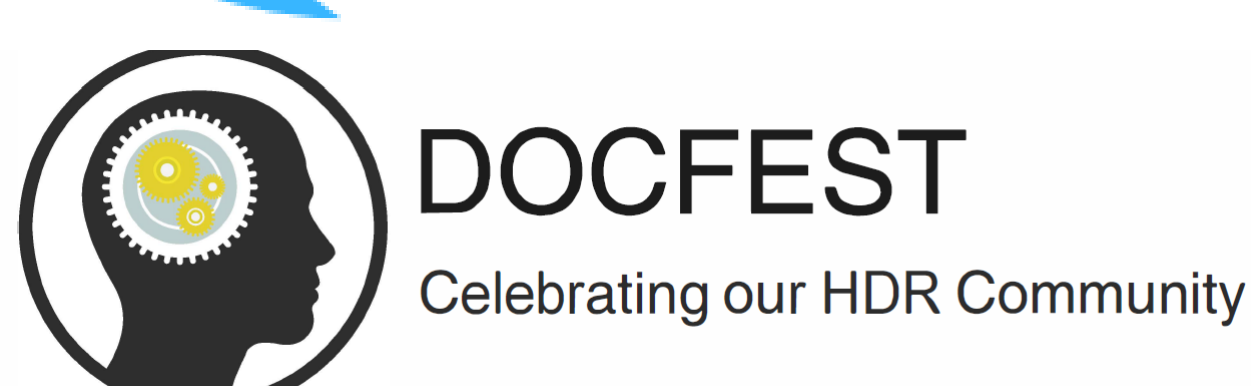
Participant 13.

“I’ve always had a bit of a passion to work in a rural area, starting from when I was at uni, and my last placement being in a rural area. I’ve had family and friends work in country areas... and was always taken aback by how kind people were and how welcoming it was.... it’s something I wanted to be a part of and thought this was a good time to test the waters and try it out.”

Participant 10.

- ✗ Challenging living away from home while transitioning to working
- ✗ Remote supervision and professional isolation
- ✗ Difficult working with multiple funding streams, complex clients and competing demands
- ✗ Short term contracts, challenging to find accommodation, feel secure and part of the community
- ✗ Ongoing vacancies results in high workloads, service gaps, prioritising challenges
- ✗ Burnout, stress and overwhelm for new graduates who are not prepared for rural practice or not well supported

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