

Increased self-efficacy is associated with rural career intent in Australian Rural Clinical School students: a FRAME sub-study

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Background: Self-efficacy is a psychological construct that has been well described in career choice models. Self-efficacy is associated with motivation, educational development and interest levels. The role of self-efficacy in rural medical career intentions has not been studied. The purpose of this study is to investigate medical student's self-efficacy at the time of finishing their Rural Clinical School (RCS) placement and factors associated with self-efficacy. Secondary aims are to explore whether interest levels or self efficacy are better predictors for rural career intentions.

Methods: Data were derived from the 2013 Federation of Rural Australian Medical Educators (FRAME) survey. Questionnaire responses were analysed from 656 medical students from regional Australia. All respondents had completed their final term at an RCS.

Results: 83.8% of all students recalled an increase in their interest levels for rural medicine as a result of their RCS experience, however only 26.9% indicated an actual intention to work in a rural area. Bivariate analyses showed female gender ($p=0.003$), rural background ($p<0.001$), an RCS preference for clinical training ($p<0.001$), and general practice intentions ($p=0.004$) were factors associated with higher levels of self-efficacy. Self-efficacy was associated with an increased interest in both general practice ($p<0.001$) and rural and remote medical practice ($p<0.001$). Step-wise regression analyses showed that inclusion of self-efficacy in the model explained 20% of the variance in rural medicine interest levels. Self-efficacy in the model explained an additional 4% of the variance in rural practice intent (Model included gender, rural background, preference for RCS, generalist intent, rural practice interest and self-efficacy).

Conclusion: An RCS placement is associated with self reported interest in rural medicine. Self-efficacy is associated with increased interest levels for rural medicine and rural medical career intent.