

Remote allied health practice—perspectives from Australia, Canada and the United States of America

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A Churchill Fellowship in 2013 allowed the presenter to travel to Canada and the United States of America to visit four teams that provide Physiotherapy (PT), Occupational Therapy (OT) and Speech Pathology (SP) services to Indigenous persons living in the very remote areas. As an OT with experience working in the Top End of the Northern Territory it was an opportunity to share and learn.

The project allowed me to learn about ideas, modifications to practise and service delivery models other teams are using towards providing effective and culturally appropriate allied health and rehabilitation services.

The poster will provide a brief description of each of the five teams (including the presenters own team), their area and scope of practise and service model used.

Similarities in the challenges to practice: Despite the very different climates and countries, many common themes emerged around the barriers and challenges which teams face when providing therapy (OT, PT, and SP) services. The common challenges will be identified on the poster.

Solutions: Each team demonstrated different ways in which they had adapted their practice and service models to address key challenges and improve service delivery. Ideas and practise varied between teams but some ideas included the use of video technology to make service provision more regular, training or up-skilling local workers to build community capacity, modification of service models, adapting the therapeutic services provided to meet presenting needs, and developing clear prioritisation tools or eligibility criteria to filter clients.

Each of the teams and the resources available were different however many of the ideas observed have the scope to be adapted and implemented within other remote settings. The poster will detail some of the ideas and strategies, particularly those that are relevant and applicable within Australia, which have been implemented by teams towards improving remote service delivery.