Increasing the quantity and quality of rural placements for undergraduate nursing and midwifery students: achievements and challenges

Morgan Smith¹, Kym Medlicott¹, Christine Bartel¹
¹Inner North Country Health Services, Country Health South Australia

This presentation reports on a Health Workforce Australia funded joint initiative between Country Health South Australia Local Health Network—Inner North Country Health Services and the University of South Australia. The aims of the project were to develop the quantity and quality of placements available to undergraduate University of South Australia nursing, midwifery and physiotherapy students and in doing so expose students to the opportunities available when working rurally and the knowledge and skills required to do so. The project is funded until December 2013. The presentation explores initiatives in the area of nursing and midwifery clinical education.

Strategies were implemented to increase the number of placements available to nursing and midwifery students in Inner North Country Health Services. An education facilitator and two clinical facilitators were appointed to manage the cohorts of students in conjunction with clinical staff who were responsible for the client load.

Strategies to improve coordination and communication of placements were implemented. Increased numbers of students were managed through closer coordination with the university and improved communication with clinicians. Approaches to provide clinicians with greater information on the students’ learning needs were developed, as well as careful rostering of students over seven days of the week.

Strategies to educate staff to educate students more effectively were also implemented. This included staff development sessions and hard copy and electronic resources.

Strategies were implemented to enable students to identify knowledge and practice skills unique to rural health care settings. Focus was also placed on enabling students to understand the knowledge and skills required of the rural health workforce of the future in which they could play a role.
Some interim findings from the evaluation of this project will be presented to illustrate the effectiveness of some of the strategies. Lessons learned from the project to date will also be explored.