Primary Health Care Research and Information Service: a knowledge exchange organisation for rural health

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Purpose: This study explores how a knowledge exchange organisation has assisted its policy, practice, research and consumer stakeholders to strengthen PHC with a specific focus on rural health.

Theory: Knowledge exchange includes information management, linkage, capacity development, and support. Knowledge exchange bases its practice on exchanging information and knowledge in the most appropriate format with the right people at the most suitable time.

Methods: We describe the knowledge exchange methods used by this organisation and illustrate how well they have been taken up by our stakeholders.

Findings: In the five-year period (2007 to 2011), this organisation has:

• developed an extensive, searchable website that includes 2092 items on rural health
• convened five national conferences where 240 rural health abstracts were presented as papers or posters
• produced weekly eBulletins and bi-monthly newsletters that included 536 items on rural health
• developed a publicly available online searchable register of researchers and research that includes 351 rural researchers and 171 rural projects
• published short papers on current PHC topics plus policy issue reviews relevant to rural health
• created online fact sheets on how to carry out knowledge exchange that are applicable to rural health researchers, providers and policy makers.

Data show that these are accessed by our stakeholder groups while evaluations indicate these have been useful.
Discussion: Our website, suite of publications and resources and researcher profiles show a significant proportion of what PHC RIS does is related to rural health. PHC RIS has and continues to make a strong commitment to rural health.