Cultural immersion—what impact does it have?

Janie Smith¹
¹Medical Education, Bond University

What do we know about the rural and remote pharmacist workforce?

Really, we know little about the rural pharmacist workforce in Australia: who they are, what their background is, why they choose to work rurally and why they leave or stay. The workforce shortages compare only with medicine despite the pharmacist student intake having doubled over the past decade, along with a significant increase in the number of regional pharmacy schools.

Between 2008 and 2010 a large national pharmacist research project was undertaken, funded by the Pharmacy Guild of Australia, to describe the rural and remote pharmacist workforce for the first time. The findings include the rural origins of the rural pharmacist workforce, the factors that attract or detract pharmacists from working rurally and the barriers and drivers to rural practice. They also discuss the phenomena identified during the research whereby pharmacists were found to move from one rural area to another, yet this movement was not being captured as rural retention data. The findings from this landmark study will be presented at a national conference for the first time and it will draw out the impact it is having on policy and program development for the future of the rural pharmacy profession.