

## Preparing for and maintaining competency in a career in rural and remote health

**John Setchell, Rosemary Moyle**

Royal Flying Doctor Service, NSW

Preparing for and maintaining competency in a career in rural and remote health

The challenges of maintaining the numbers of health professional staff having the required skills and competencies to work safely in rural and remote Australia are ever present. Over the past 15 years, a large non-government rural and remote health service has strategically developed a broad range of health education and training programs covering the range of experience from undergraduate students to senior fellows of professional colleges such as RACGP and ACRRM. The underlying philosophy of this strategy is not only to entice and encourage increased uptake of health professional careers in rural and remote Australia, but also to increase the level of understanding of the particular challenges associated with providing health services in rural and remote locations.

This paper will describe each of the programs, the target audiences and the competencies that are acquired. Data will be provided on the numbers of participants that have undertaken the various courses along with summary details of their responses and feedback. The courses range from an undergraduate medical and nursing student 'Ride-along' program, to Basic and Advanced First aid training for residents of remote locations, General Practice Registrar advanced training and on to a remote emergency skills program for senior rural GP's. To date over 1,000 undergraduate students have taken part in the 'Ride-along' program and the remote skills program has provided emergency medicine skills practical training to over 700 rural and remote GPs in South Australia.

The paper will conclude with a discussion on the future training challenges for rural and remote health professionals and how information technology may have an increasing focus in providing that training across the vast distances over which the NGO provides health services.