

# Rogano Session:

## Professional Supervisor Training Needs for the Rural and Remote Psychology Workforce

Dr Sharon Varela  
Centre for Rural and Remote Health  
E: [sharon.varela@jcu.edu.au](mailto:sharon.varela@jcu.edu.au)

Michelle Aniftos  
Southern Queensland Rural Health

# Project Background

- Psychology is unique because supervisor training is a requirement of the Psychology Board of Australia.
- Psychologists must pass three components of the training to become eligible to supervise: a knowledge assessment, a skills workshop, and a competency assessment.
- Supervisors of the rural and remote psychology workforce have unique challenges that need to be addressed in supervisor training
- It is important to understand what these challenges are from the supervisor and supervisee perspectives
- This current project is the first of several studies looking at supervision training and support needs from the supervisor and supervisee perspective

## **The first three phases of this project will involve:**

1. Identify evidence-based models, training and tools for rural and remote supervision
2. Understand the training needs of rural and remote supervisors
3. Understand the rural and remote experiences of supervisors, including rural origin and work experience

The outcomes of this research will be used for workforce development and planning, and for improving supervisor training.

***Ethics approval has been granted by the HREC at JCU (approval number H7961)***

# Methods

**1. Phase 1** was a **systematic review** that is currently being prepared for submission to a Journal. This presentation will focus on phases two and three of this project.

**2. Phase 2** is a series of **focus groups** targeting experienced supervisors:

- *The design is a phenomenology design* – with rural and remote practice/supervision being the phenomenon the research is aiming to develop an understanding of (through the eyes of experienced supervisors)
- *Recruitment* was through email and social media using a targeted and snowballing approach. The goal was to have a final sample of between 19-30 experienced psychologists. We currently have interviewed 19 experienced psychologists and are seeking at least 6 more before the data is analysed.

Q: Are 20-30 interviews sufficient or should we be including more psychologists in this phase of the research?

**2. Phase 2** is a series of **focus groups** targeting experienced supervisors (cont.):

- Interviews are recorded and transcribed. *Semi-structured questions* focused on-
  - the unique demands of rural and remote practice
  - the skills and supports a supervisor needs (to adequately support and monitor a rural and remote psychologist)
  - how to develop a successful Community of Practice to support supervisors of rural and remote practitioners
- A *thematic qualitative analysis* will be employed to understand the key themes and issues raised through the focus groups.

Q: Is a thematic analysis the most appropriate for this design, or should we look at a content analysis to align the research more closely with Phase 3?

## Phase 3 will be a survey targeting experienced supervisors:

- The *research design* employed a concurrent mixed method (triangulation design), with quantitative data prioritised over qualitative data. A purposive sample is being applied, with recruitment targeting a naturally forming group (i.e., experienced professional/clinical supervisors of psychologists).
- *Recruitment* will be through email and social media using a targeted and snowballing approach. The goal is to have a final sample of between 100-200 experienced professional/clinical supervisors of psychologists.

Q: Are there design or recruitment issues we should consider further?

# Methods

## Key survey focus areas for Phase 3 are:

- Years of experience as a psychologist/supervisor
- Supervisor training completed
- Key challenges of rural and remote practice/supervision
- Key skills required to practice ethically in rural and remote locations
- Rural origin
- Rural work experience as a health professional (including fly-in and drive-in roles and outreach roles)
- Rural supervisor experience (including providing remote supervision)
- Public Health or Rural Generalist Qualifications held or being worked towards

Q: Are there any other key focus areas that would be important to focus on? Should we also be collecting attitudinal or intention data around future plans to supervise rural and remote psychologists?

## Phase 3 analysis:

- *Analysis* will include a content and descriptive analysis
- We will be looking for links between rural and remote origin and rural and remote practice/supervision, as well as years of experience as a supervisor and provision of rural and remote supervision
- Further we are interested in perspectives on rural and remote practice and supervision

Q: Should we consider other types of analysis? If so, what would you advise?



# Questions

Throughout this presentation highlighted areas we would like feedback on. Below is a summary of these questions:

## ***Phase 2:***

- Are 20-30 interviews sufficient or should we be including more psychologists in this phase of the research?
- Is a thematic analysis the most appropriate for this design, or should we look at a content analysis to align the research more closely with Phase 3?

## ***Phase 3:***

- Are there design or recruitment issues we should consider further?
- Are there any other key focus areas that would be important to focus on? Should we also be collecting attitudinal or intention data around future plans to supervise rural and remote psychologists?
- Should we consider other types of analysis? If so, what would you advise?

# Feedback/Thank You

Any other feedback you might want to provide is appreciated. Feedback can be emailed to:

- [sharon.varela@jcu.edu.au](mailto:sharon.varela@jcu.edu.au)

*Thank you to everyone who has contributed to this project. This project is a collaboration between researchers from the Centre for Rural and Remote Health (Mount Isa and Longreach), Southern Queensland Rural Health (Toowoomba) and The University of Newcastle.*

Future research will focus on:

- Understanding the support needs of new supervisors from the perspective of new supervisors
- Understanding the support needs of supervisees from the perspective of the supervisee
- Including other health professions in the research to understand supervision needs across professions