

RESEARCH DIRECTIONS

Get me a Doctor

Professor Rhonda Craven and Dr Gawaian Bodkin-Andrews from the Centre for Educational Research, and Professor Ian Wilson from the School of Medicine are exploring strategies for attracting and retaining medical doctors in rural and regional communities through an Australian Research Council Discovery Project grant.

'Keeping pace with the demand for doctors in rural and regional communities is one of Australia's biggest challenges' says Professor Craven. 'There is worldwide emphasis on understanding the psychological and social drivers that enable home-grown doctors to successfully complete their studies and make a decision to practice in communities where there is a shortage of doctors. However, research is lacking to find out what these drivers are and how they might be used to attract and retain rural medical graduates to return to work where they grew up.' Professor Wilson explains that 'UWS has recently established a program to produce regional home-grown doctors, but the impact of this program is yet to be tested. This interdisciplinary project will tease out the psychosocial determinants of what seeds success for medical students' education, and how these impact on achievement, retention, physical and mental well-being and commitment to practise in rural communities.'

The research team will conduct interviews with medical educators and UWS medical students to obtain a deeper understanding of the impact of skills and personality traits such as self-confidence, resilience, communication skills, motivations and emotional responses on their decision to study, stay studying and work in rural areas once their studies are complete.



These factors will be explored through standardised psychosocial tests, and focus groups will further explore whether Indigenous medical students have different views to non-Indigenous students.

The outcomes of this project have the potential to 'break the cycle' of doctor shortage in under-served areas by generating new solutions to this long-term problem, leading to improved healthcare options for remote and rural communities.

Project Title: Keeping Pace: A critical longitudinal analysis of the psychosocial determinants of seeding success in educating home-grown doctors for regional communities

Funding has been set at: \$245,000

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