

Building Social Histories in rural contexts: Improving health and medical students' expertise

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INTRODUCTION

- Rural Australians live and work in a range of environments but often experience greater levels of disadvantage
- Social histories allow students and clinicians to understand social context, deepen relationships and provide tailored health care
- Traditionally, social histories are not comprehensively considered from a rural perspective

AIM

- To improve medical and health students' expertise in building social histories in rural contexts
- To develop resources to support a comprehensive approach to social histories in rural contexts

METHODS

- A working party of rural clinicians are developing an online module, face to face workshop, evidence based guide and case history/reflection exercise
- Workshop pilot conducted October 2019 with 16 medical students based at School of Rural Health Dubbo/Orange

DISCUSSION

- At baseline, students listed health-related behaviours, location of residence, income/occupation and social/family circumstances as important elements of social histories in rural contexts
- When compared to documented approaches to social histories, these results demonstrate an opportunity to further develop students' social history building skills
- Students will complete a case history and written reflection which will be analysed qualitatively

For more information:

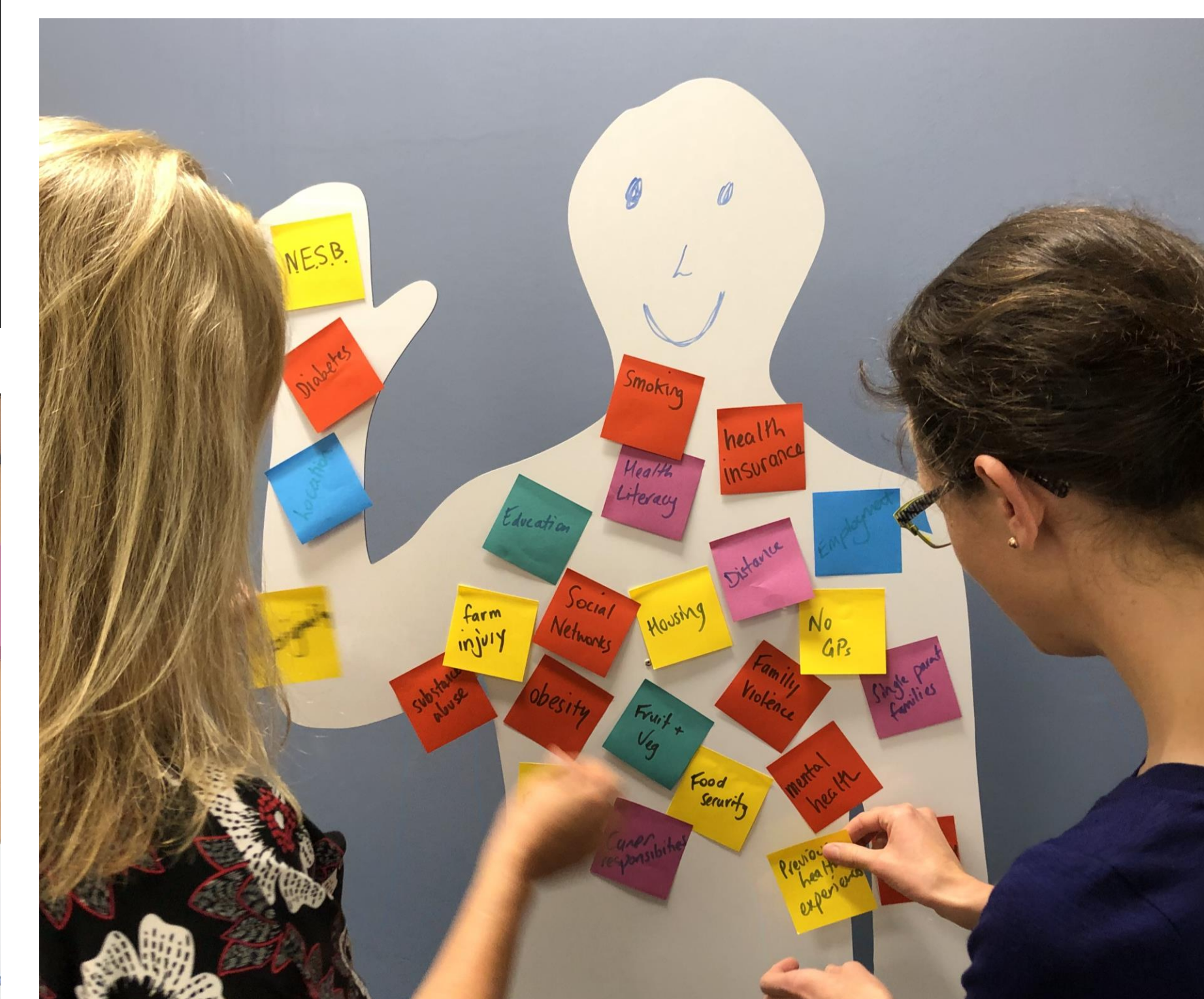
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Social histories are fundamental to the clinical consultation and require a comprehensive and culturally safe approach.

Social history topics discussed by students at baseline (in order of frequency):

- Alcohol, smoking, other substance use
- Location of residence*
- Occupation/income*
- Family situation and carer responsibilities
- Highest level of education
- Diet & exercise[^]
- Access to primary and specialist health care[^]
- Hobbies/leisure activities

*Equal second; [^]Equal sixth



Proposed approach to improved social histories¹:

- Individual characteristics
- Life circumstances
- Psychological health
- Perceptions of health and health care
- Health-related behaviours
- Access to and utilisation of health services

¹ Behforouz, H. L., Drain, P. K., & Rhatigan, J. J. (2014). Rethinking the social history. *New England Journal of Medicine*, 371(14), 1277-1279.

Resources:

- Online module
- Face to face workshop
- Case history & reflection
- Evidence based guide