

ONLINE RURAL SEXUAL HEALTH EDUCATION FOR HEALTH PRACTITIONERS: WHAT'S IMPORTANT AND WHAT'S NOT?

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Introduction: Rural doctors have limited accessible professional development opportunities compared to metropolitan doctors. Professional development resources that focus on sexual health consultations and specifically address the needs of rural patients and practitioners are non-existent in Australia, yet the need for such training has been identified.

Methods: To contribute to the current online resources available for rural doctors, the Centre for Excellence in Rural Sexual Health (CERSH) instigated the production of online learning modules in partnership with the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM), and the NSW STI program unit. In total, 8 modules have been completed. All modules are appropriate for continuing professional development and are accredited by RACGP and ACCRM. Certification for nursing log books is offered.

Results: The module content was determined in collaboration with experts in the field and focuses on identified needs of rural health practitioners. Modules topics include: sexual history taking, privacy and confidentiality, contract tracing in small communities and avoiding assumptions in sexual health care. These modules are designed for the adult learner and have variety within the design to appeal to different learning styles. Choice of modules for specific areas of interest and an opportunity to reflect on practice and elements for improvement are offered. The modules also highlight the differences and similarities between urban and rural practice.

All modules are presented with references, learning activities, reinforcing activities and resources for further learning or use in practice. CERSH is evaluating the modules to aid continued improvement and a post evaluation is structured to assess clinical confidence in sexual health.

Conclusion: The modules promote inquiry based learning, and provide opportunity for rural doctors to critique and reflect on their own practice. The project highlights the need for rural specific sexual health clinical education, in a modality that is accessible to rural practitioners.

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