

Rural Health and Research **Congress**

Medical Student Led Communication and Advocacy Training in Regional Secondary Schools

Hannah Ryan, Rose Kennedy, Isabelle McKay,
A/Prof Joseph Suttie MBBS, BSc(Med) Hons (I) UNSW, PhD (Oxford), FRACP



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Rural Health Workforce

29% of Australians live in rural and remote areas. [1]

Regional and remote communities have higher incidences of every major disease. [2]

*2.5 medical practitioners per 1000 in rural and remote areas,
4.1 per 1000 in metropolitan areas. [3]*



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Rural Students becoming Rural Doctors

Australian Medical Students' Association (AMSA) policy recognises:

- *Medical and allied health students from rural backgrounds are more likely to return to those areas.*

BUT

- *Complex barriers limit or deter aspiring rural medical school applicants. [4]*



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My Experience

"You must be crazy smart"



"Your ATAR is probably double mine"

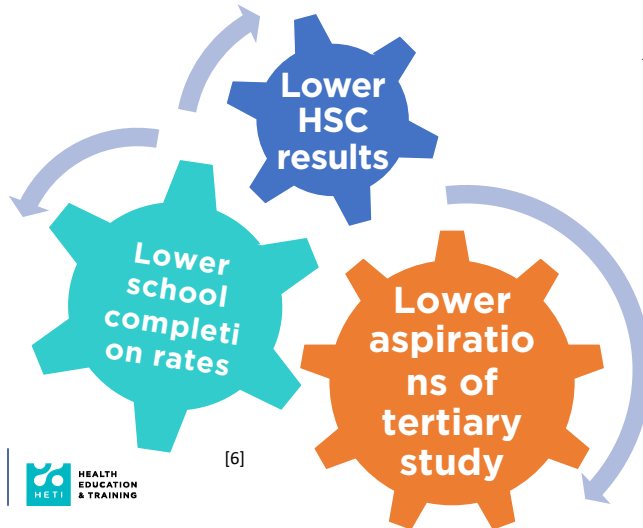


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Disrupting a Culture of Underachievement

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Australian Domestic University Students in 2018:

- 80.5% Metropolitan
- 18.5% Rural
- 0.8% Remote [5]



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Social Desirability Bias in the Classroom

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*Research subjects choose responses they believe are **more socially desirable or acceptable**, rather than responses truly reflective of their thoughts or feelings. [7]*

In schools:



Tall Poppy Syndrome



Natural deflection




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Benefits of Near-to-Peer Mentorship



Better attitudes towards school






Better relationships with adults and peers



Improved internal affective states
[8]

Mentor relatability is a significant predictor of mentees' self-efficacy and interest in a subject [9]

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Our Proposed Program

Still looking for a catchy name!

Free communication and public speaking workshops offered to Secondary Schools in the Riverina.

Driven by volunteer medical students from the University of New South Wales (UNSW) Rural Clinical School Wagga Wagga.




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Workshop Structure

Flexibility is key!

- Voluntary attendance
- Targeting years 9 and 10 (ages 15-17)
- Small group setting (10-15 students)
- 30-60mins (class period or lunch time)
- Fun, game-based exercises
- Opportunity for a final showcase or public speaking competition



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Workshop Goals: Direct and Indirect

Direct

- Improved communication skills
- Greater confidence and self-esteem
- Better preparedness for university entry, employment and health advocacy

Indirect

- Exposure to HSC high achievers
- Context for academic mentorship
- Pursuit of academic excellence

“I want to be a rural doctor”

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2019 Pilot Workshop

- 40 students participated
- Multiple well-attended sessions
- Culminated in a non-compulsory public speaking competition
- Winner competed at the local final of the 2019 Plain English Speaking Award
- Planning for the 2020 school calendar



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Measuring Success

- Pre- and post-program student questionnaires
- Long term mentorship relationships

Following participants longitudinally:

- Medical school application and admission rates
- Medical school graduate rates
- Rural employment



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