

# Rural Pharmacy Placements – Student Perception and Experience!

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**Background:** Rural clinical placements offered in Australian Schools of Pharmacy provide a strong exposure to rural experience to students, and are often their first exposure to rural life.

**Aims:** To investigate pharmacy students' intention to work in a rural environment after graduation, and student perception of rural clinical placements. Facilitators and barriers to work in rural areas were also investigated.

**Methods:** A survey of pharmacy students was conducted at the peak national pharmacy students' body (NAPSA) congress in Hobart, Tasmania. A mixed-methods approach investigated intentions to practice rurally. Quantitative measurements were made using a likert scale. Qualitative data was extracted from written responses and thematically analysed.

**Results:** Over 50% of students indicated an intention to work in rural or regional areas. 78.6% of survey students indicated their willingness to work in a rural area after their rural placement. There were several barriers to the students' desire to take up rural positions; the strongest barriers were social isolation and lack of family support.

**Conclusions/ Recommendations:** Rural placements can affect student perception and attitudes towards a rural life. These results can be utilised by industry education representatives to target rural training opportunities and enhance the understanding of pharmacy student's motivators to rurality.