

Progress Report



Rural Research Capacity Building Program July 2008

The Rural Research Capacity Building Program (RRCBP) commenced its first intake in September 2006, and accepted its second intake in August 2007. This report is a snapshot of progress in the RRCBP 20 months after its implementation. In total (at May 1, 2008) there are 39 researchers in the RRCBP, 17 from a nursing background and 13 from an allied health background. The other remaining nine include professions such as Health Promotion and Information Management. All candidates are employees of rural Area Health Services across NSW and their research interests include inquiry of both quantitative and qualitative nature.

2006 Intake Update

Out of the first intake of 26 research candidates, there have been eight withdraw. Eighteen have submitted for ethics with 16 receiving full ethics approval and have data collection underway (six of whom have completed their data collection). Seventeen of the 18 candidates currently have at least one mentor/critical friend appointed to assist them with their methodology and ongoing work. Three candidates are in the finals stages of analysis, or have completed their analysis and are writing their final reports and articles for publication. Nine candidates are on target to complete by June or July 2008, with the remainder negotiating extensions up to November 2008.

Rural Research progress 2006 intake	GSAHS	GWAHS	HNEAHS	NCAHS	Total
Attended research methods course	8	4	5	9	26
Withdrawn	2	2	3	1	8
Current mentors	6	2	2	7	17
Ethics approved	4	2	2	8	16
Ethics submitted	6	2	2	8	18
Attended Tamworth workshop	6	0	4	9	19
Data collection completed	0	0	1	5	6
Analysis completed	0	0	0	1	1
Attended Feb workshop (at least one day)	6	2	0	7	15
Presented poster or paper presentation	0	0	2	3	5

Information correct as at 24/04/08

Increasing research skills

A tool has been used to identify self perceived ability to undertake specific research skills (Research Spider). Candidates were asked to complete this at their first research skills workshop in September 2006 and a follow-up was conducted in February 2007, 18 months after the commencement of candidates in the program. The Research Spider showed extremely pleasing results. Seventeen of the 18 surveys were returned (94% response rate), and show strongly significant results in 7 of the 10 items using a paired t-test. The following list of items is in order of most to least significant for all items on the SPIDA.

1. Writing a research protocol ($p=0.0000166$)
2. Using qualitative research methods ($p=0.000204$)
3. Critically reviewing the literature ($p=0.000447$)
4. Generating research ideas ($p=0.00478$)
5. Writing and presenting research ($p=0.005333$)
6. Finding relevant literature ($p=0.015627$)
7. Applying for research funding ($p=0.04$)

8. Using quantitative research methods ($p=0.065726$)
9. Analysing and interpreting results ($p=0.068813$)
10. Publishing research ($p=0.07204$)

It is also planned to conduct a final SPIDA as candidates complete their report and article for peer review. This timeline will obviously vary for the candidates in the program as some are working toward different finish dates to others.

2007 Intake Update

In the second intake of 24 research candidates, there have been three withdraw. Four candidates have submitted for ethics with two receiving full approval. Twenty of the 21 candidates have at least one mentor/critical friend appointed to assist them with their methodology and ongoing work. This progress is comparable to the same time last year with the 2006 group. The work of the 2006 group is focussed toward finalising ethics and commencing data collection. Some candidates are also working on their literature reviews.

Rural Research progress 2007 intake	GSAHS	GWAHS	HNEAHS	NCAHS	IRCST	Total
Attended research methods course	6	4	6	6	2	24
Withdrawn	1	0	0	1	1	3
Mentors appointed	5	4	5	5	1	20
Ethics approved	0	2	0	2	0	4
Ethics submitted	2	4	1	2	0	9
Attended February workshop	5	4	4	4	2	19

Information correct as at 24/04/08

Investment

The RRCBP has recurrent funding of \$800,000 per annum. The bulk of these funds support research candidates with backfill, a Research Support Officer (0.4FTE) and education initiatives. To date, full annual allocations have been underspent as a result of not accepting the full quota of candidates (as applications did not meet criteria) and as a result of withdrawals from the program.

2006/2007 expenditure \$356,237 (note: only one intake operating in this financial year)

2007/2008 expenditure \$502,977

Partnerships

The RRCBP is supported by a number of parties. This support is integral to both the teaching in the program and the mentoring and support for candidates in their workplace. Examples of this include universities, major hospitals (both rural and metropolitan) and area health services. It is often key individuals with a passion for research within these organisations who provide strong leadership and support for the candidates.

Evaluation framework

The RRCBP is being evaluated in two forms. The first uses a 'program logic' model, and includes similar information to that reported above. Briefly, it captures inputs, outputs and short and long term outcomes of the program. The program logic evaluation model will be updated annually.

A more detailed evaluation is also planned looking at capacity building concepts such as sustainability, problem solving, leadership, infrastructure, organisational development, workforce development, resource allocation, partnerships and relevance to practice. Data on these concepts will be collected in interviews with candidates, mentors and managers.

References

Smith H et al. (2002) The 'Research Spider': a simple method of assessing research experience. *Primary Health Care Research and Development*. 3 139-140.