

Centre for Research Excellence
in Medical Workforce Dynamics

Medicine in Australia: Balancing Employment and Life (MABEL)



The stability of rural outreach by specialist doctors: A longitudinal study



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Sustaining service access



- Around 1 in 5 participate in outreach
- Sustaining access:
 - Continuity of care
 - Relationships/ investment
- This study:
 - Is **ongoing** rural outreach common?
 - What factors influence it?

Methods

- MABEL waves 1 to 4
- The sample: 848 specialists
- Outcome: 3 years outreach to same town
 - Measured by two time points, 3 year period &
 - Continued to work clinically & travel
- Predictors:
 - **Model 1:** Career stage (early <45, mid 45-64, late 65+ years); sex; practice sector; metro or rural
 - **Model 2:** Distance; no. of locations; remoteness

Ongoing outreach

- 440 (51.9%) ongoing
- Who are they?
 - Male
 - (OR 1.82, 1.28-2.60)
 - Mid career (45-64 years)
 - (OR 1.44, 1.04-1.99)
 - Working in mixed mainly private practice
 - (OR 1.73, 1.18-2.53)
 - Working only private practice
 - (OR 0.51, 0.32-0.82)

Do service characteristics matter?

- Specialist from metro v's rural location
 - (OR 0.81, 0.60-1.11)
- Distance travelled <300km or >300km
 - (OR 0.91, 0.68-1.20)
- Visiting two to three v's one location
 - (OR 1.48, 1.12-1.95)



What does this mean?

- Half of all outreach is relatively stable
- Demographics
 - Career stability
 - Gender
- Practice sector
 - Autonomy and drive for practice diversity
 - Control over work & financial costs
- Service patterns
 - Flexible
 - Visit more towns

Implications

- Plan more systematic outreach
 - Specialists / teams
 - Local PHC / practice conditions
 - Policy/ funding cycles
 - Telehealth as a substitution?
- Incentives
 - Women
 - Early or late career
 - Private sector



MABEL: thesis evidence so far



- Workforce interest and involvement
- Key challenges:
 - Outer regional/remote distribution
 - Service coordination
 - Sustaining service provision
- Solutions:
 - Clear national vision about role of outreach
 - Regional coordinators
 - Incentives

Thank you!

