

ABSTRACT SUBMISSION

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Abstract Title: A collaborative approach to increasing access to diabetes education in the bush.

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Background: The Murrumbidgee region of NSW experiences high rates of chronic disease, with diabetes featuring prominently. The region also experiences a distinct shortage of credentialed diabetes educators resulting in significant lack of access to best practice primary health management.

Approach: The Murrumbidgee Primary Health Network (MPHN) sought expressions of interest from practice nurses and other approved primary health providers to undertake a post graduate certificate in Diabetes Education and Management with up to 10 scholarships available to assist in the completion of this training. To build a community of practice, a partnership was established with the Murrumbidgee Local Health District (MLHD) Diabetes Nurse Practitioner and Diabetes Clinical Nurse Consultant to facilitate a mentoring support group for participants while undertaking their study and credentialing process.

Outcomes / Results: The current 10 scholarship holders include seven pharmacists, a practice nurse, a dietitian and a physiotherapist, covering seven communities across the Murrumbidgee. Participants commenced studies in February 2017 and have met together for face to face mentoring workshops and have established an online forum. The expected outcomes include an increase in the number of credentialed diabetes educators in the Murrumbidgee region; improved confidence and skills of primary health providers in managing diabetes, and; improved support for patients in self-management strategies.

Take Home Message: Undertaking post graduate studies can present a challenge for isolated practitioners; establishing a community of practice can help to overcome these. This approach highlights the benefits of partnership and how local health districts and primary health networks can work together to address workforce shortage, whilst also supporting excellent in clinical practice.