**Abstract submitted for the 5th NSW Rural Health and Research Congress**

**Twin Towns,Tweed Heads 9 - 11 November 2016**

**Congress Stream:** No 5: Technology in healthcare: innovation in action

**Alternate Stream:**

**Abstract Title:** Online Learning: Does it click with rural nurses?

**Author/s:** **Kim Riley**, Clinical Nurse Consultant, Hunter New England Local Health District. Scone, NSW 2337

**Background**

The provision of continuing professional development for nurses has seen a significant move to the online environment. Benefits of online learning to rural nurses and organisations are its availability at all hours of the day and night, the increased number of nurses who can access it and a significant reduction in costs across the board (Brunero & Lamont, 2010).

However, there is a need to better understand rural nurses’ perspective of online learning in order to design a system that can better met their needs, now and into the future. Key questions that need further consideration are:

* How well does online learning meet the needs of rural nurses
* What factors impact on their engagement and satisfaction with this form of learning
* How can online learning be improved to better their needs

**Approach**

Using Appreciative Inquiry (AI) methodology, nurses at three rural facilities were asked to reflect on their experiences and interactions with online learning. AI methodology allowed nurses to describe what works well about online learning, provided an opportunity to imagine what could be and put forward their ideas about how to progress from the ‘imagined’ to the ‘real’.

**Outcomes / Results**

The research findings revealed that although this group of nurses appreciated and valued the increased flexibility and access to education, there was very little engagement with online learning beyond the completion of mandatory education required by the organisation.

**Take Home Message**

In order for online learning to better meet rural nurses’ needs:

* Feeling of isolation need to be overcome
* Options for interaction and feedback needs to be enhanced.

References:Brunero, S. & Lamont, S. (2010) The ‘difficult’ nurse-patient relationship: Development and evaluation of an e-learning package. *Contemporary Nurse.* 35(2), 136 – 146.