Congress stream: No 5. Rural health research in practice – connecting for change

Alternate stream: No 3. Social determinants of health in the bush – the changing landscape

Abstract title: Healthy Kids Bus Stop: overcoming barriers to care in the bush

Author/s: **Ms Samantha Adams**, Ms Jana Kobras, Ms Elke Mitchell

Royal Far West, Sydney, NSW, 2095, Australia

Background: Parents are not always able to recognise their child’s health issues, resulting in an underuse of health services and potentially long-term health and developmental disadvantage for children.

Approach: The Healthy Kids Bus Stop (HKBS) is a travelling comprehensive screening program for children between 3-5 years of age, including physical and developmental health checks. Parents complete the Child Personal Health Record and Ages and Stages Questionnaire (ASQ) with a Child and Family Health Nurse. If necessary, children are then referred to local health services for follow-up.

Outcomes/Results: Across 7 rural communities in NSW, 42% of parents reported that their child had no health problems. However, 74% of these children were referred to health services. Available literature suggests geographic isolation, lack of access to medical practitioners and low levels of health literacy may explain these results. The HKBS program helps to overcome these barriers by providing children and their families with access to health professionals and referral pathways.

Take home message: The high level of referrals and limited capacity of parents to recognise their child’s health issues suggest that this program is effective and fulfils a need in these communities. Additionally, parent information sessions would increase the ability of parents to correctly identify their child’s health issues.