



The Perceived Research Capacity and Culture within Non-Metropolitan Local Health Districts in NSW



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Aim

Increasing the capacity of organisations to participate in research is a means of evaluating new and improved practices and cost efficiencies. This study aimed to identify and understand the perceptions of research capacity and culture of the rural NSW Local Health District workforce.

Methods

A cross-sectional survey of rural NSW Local Health District staff was delivered in an online format. The Research Capacity and Culture tool was used to collect all research capacity and culture item variables using a 9-point scale (1=lowest, 9=highest). General demographic data was also collected to provide context. Descriptive statistics were reported of organisational, team and individual domains as well as the frequencies of barriers and motivators to research.

Results

A total of 691 participants completed the survey in its entirety. Overall respondents reported low range adequate organisational support (rescaled mean = 4.0) for research and less than adequate support at the team level (rescaled mean = 3.4). Individual skill ratings were adequate (rescaled mean = 4.5). Differences between LHDs were identified across all domains. ‘Other work takes priority’ was the most common barrier selected by 77% of respondents whilst developing skills was the most common motivator to do research (72%).

Conclusions

The results of this research found that rural healthcare workers perceive their individual skills and organisational support for research to be adequate and the team level of support to be less than adequate. This suggests that all levels need to be engaged to support and enable a multi-level approach (both top-down and bottom-up) to research capacity building strategies with particular attention focused at the team level. The barriers and motivators for research are consistent with those found in the literature.

Implications

Knowledge of existing research capability can assist organisations to make strategic decisions about how to engage rural healthcare workers in research activities and provide a baseline on which to measure their research capacity building strategies.

For the full report on this project visit our website, follow the link to the Rural Research Capacity Building Program and click on ‘view completed projects’

Nicole Raschke is the Research Operations Manager for the Mid North Coast Local Health District where she supports and facilitates staff to develop and conduct locally relevant research. Nicole has worked across a wide range of health fields and professions in Australia and overseas from laboratory science, IT, oncology and finally research operations. Her passion for knowledge has seen her complete a Bachelor of Applied Science, Graduate Certificate Health Management, Graduate Diploma Computing, Masters Clinical Trials Practice and is currently a PhD candidate extending her HETI RRCBP project further exploring The Enablers of Research in NSW LHDs.



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