



# Doing what I have to do: Experiences of colorectal cancer in rural NSW



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**Aim:** It is known that colorectal cancer is a leading burden of disease in Australia and that rural people with cancer have poorer outcomes. Little is currently known about what it is like for rural people in NSW undergoing surgery for colorectal cancer. The study aimed to understand this experience, to inform and shape future practice.

**Methods:** Interpretive description was used to guide the study. Semi-structured interviews were conducted with nine rural people in NSW. Thematic analysis was used to develop the themes arising from the data.

**Results:** Control, interconnectedness, embodiment and transformation were major themes. The participants lost control over their normal lives at diagnosis. They placed their trust in the doctors and did as advised, feeling that this was the right thing to do. Trust could be diminished when recovery was different to expectations. Family support was important for the participants. The level of informational and emotional support required, varied. Some had recovered fully, but others were left with significant losses as a result of surgery. These included bowel disturbance, fatigue, pain and depression.

**Conclusion and implications for practice:** Currently, only some of the people having surgery for colorectal cancer in rural NSW have their emotional, informational and physical needs met. To redress this inequity and provide the support needed for them to maintain control of their lives, it is essential to identify needs early and as they arise, and ensure an understanding of their expected recovery, changes that may occur and their plan of follow up care.

***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'***

Rachel Pitt is a Nurse Practitioner in Manning Cancer and Palliative Services in Taree. She is passionate about equity of quality services for the rural cancer patient. She obtained her Masters of Nursing (NP) in 2012. Originally training in London in the 1980s she emigrated to Australia in 1999.

