



Rural casting services: what educational resources do clinicians prefer?



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This research explored the preferences of medical and health professionals working in rural health facilities in southern NSW in regards to the format of educational resources available to assist with plastering.

A cross sectional survey was conducted of all staff with a role in casting across all health facilities within Greater Southern Area Health Service (GSAHS) without a permanent orthopaedic onsite service. A total of 45/255 (17.6%) responses were obtained from a range of health professionals. Resource preference was scored on a five-point scale "extremely useful" to "not at all useful". Significance testing was completed using t-tests.

Respondents indicated a preference for a physical, paper-based instructional sheet in preference to a web-based how-to sheet (μ_d 0.82, $p=0.00001$), web-based video (μ_d 0.59, $p=0.013$), competency checklist (μ_d 0.86, $p=0.0002$) and instructional book (μ_d 0.53, $p=0.0053$). There was no significant difference in preference for a physical how-to sheet over a DVD (μ_d 0.39, $p=0.096$), although the DVD itself was preferred to a web-based how-to sheet (μ_d 0.42, $p=0.029$) or competency checklist (μ_d 0.47, $p=0.0432$). Little variation on preference could be attributed to profession, experience, training in casting or access to an orthopaedic surgeon, though preference for a physical how-to sheet was noted in respondents reporting higher levels of confidence (μ_d 0.71, $p=0.023$).

Additional responses emphasised a preference for hands-on practice and convenience in resource selection. Electronic media were identified as being of limited applicability due to issues with information technology (IT) infrastructure and internet access.

This research showed a physical, paper-based instructional sheet as the preferred resource format. The responses also indicated a need for any transition to electronic learning to be matched by a commitment to improved IT access and for the educational preferences of rural practitioners to be considered in resource selection and development.

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'

David Schmidt is a Physiotherapist who has worked his entire career in rural and regional areas in NSW and Tasmania. David is currently manager of a department that spans hospitals and community health centres in the Bega Valley region of NSW.



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