

Abstract

The 'Mine Medical': an opportunity for preventative and primary care

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AUTHOR



Ewen L McPhee¹ MBBS, FRACGP, FACRRM, Education Coordinator *

CORRESPONDENCE

*A/Prof Ewen L McPhee ewenm@emeraldmedicalgroup.com.au

AFFILIATIONS

¹ Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine, Emerald, Qld, Australia

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Abstract

Introduction: For many rural and remote regions of the world, the resources sector forms a necessary part of the local economy. Many workers and their families live in the local community and contribute to the social, educational and business fabric of that community. More still fly into rural areas where medical services exist and are required to support them. Australian coal mines require that all workers undertake a periodic medical examination to assess their fitness for their duties and to monitor for specific diseases inclusive of respiratory, hearing and musculoskeletal conditions. This presentation contends that the 'mine medical' is an untapped opportunity for the primary care clinician to gather data about the health of the mine employees and to understand, not only their health status, but also the incidence of preventable diseases. This understanding may assist a primary care clinician to design interventions for coal mine workers at a population and individual level that will improve the health of communities, while reducing the burden of avoidable disease.

Methods: In this cohort study, 100 coal mine workers, working in an open cut coal mine in Central Queensland, were examined to the Queensland coal mine workers medical standards, and their data recorded. The data were then deidentified, apart from the principal job role, and collated against measured parameters including biometrics, smoking, alcohol consumption (audit), K10, Epworth Sleepiness Score, spirometry and chest X-ray imaging.

Results: At the time of submission of the abstract, data acquisition and analysis is continuing. Preliminary data analysis reveals higher levels of obesity, poorly controlled blood pressure, elevated blood sugar levels and chronic obstructive pulmonary disease. The author will present their findings of the data analysis and discuss formative opportunities for intervention.