

Abstract

Recruitment and retention of staff in rural dispensing practice

Part of Special Series: WONCA World Rural Health Conference Abstracts 2022 

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PUBLISHED

10 January 2023 Volume 23 Issue 1

HISTORY

RECEIVED: 20 September 2022

ACCEPTED: 20 September 2022

CITATION

Cross R, McDonagh S, Cockcroft E, Turner M, Isom M, Lambourn R, Campbell J, Clark CE. Recruitment and retention of staff in rural dispensing practice. *Rural and Remote Health* 2023; 23: 8156. <https://doi.org/10.22605/RRH8156>

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Abstract

Introduction: Rural General Practice (GP) surgeries often struggle to employ and retain multidisciplinary team members. Existing research into rural recruitment and retention issues is limited, and usually focussed on doctors. Rural practices often rely on income from dispensing medications; little is known about how maintaining dispensing services contributes to the recruitment and retention of staff. This study aimed to understand the barriers and facilitators to working and remaining in rural dispensing practices, and to explore how the primary care team value dispensing services.

Methods: We undertook semi-structured interviews with multidisciplinary team members of rural dispensing practices across England. Interviews were audio-recorded, transcribed and anonymised. Framework analysis was conducted using Nvivo 12.

Results: Seventeen staff members (including GPs, practice nurses, practice managers, dispensers and administrative staff) from 12 rural dispensing practices across England were interviewed. Personal and professional reasons for taking up a role in a rural dispensing practice included perceived career autonomy and development opportunities, and preference for working and living in a rural setting. Key factors impacting retention of staff included revenue generated by dispensing, opportunities for staff development, job satisfaction and the positive work environment. Perceived challenges to retention were the balancing of the required skillset of dispensing with the wages available for the role, lack of skilled job applicants, travel difficulties and negative perceptions of rural primary care practice.

Discussion: These findings will inform national policy and practice with the aim of providing further understanding of the drivers and challenges of working in rural dispensing primary care in England.

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