

Conference Abstract

Practical recommendations to attract and retain Allied Health Professionals in rural health settings

Part of Special Series: Abstracts from the 15th National Rural and Remote Allied Health Conference (2024) ➤

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PUBLISHED

5 February 2025 Volume 25 Issue 1

HISTORY

RECEIVED: 26 January 2025

ACCEPTED: 26 January 2025

CITATION

George JE, Kayes N, Larmer PJ. Practical recommendations to attract and retain Allied Health Professionals in rural health settings. Rural and Remote Health 2025; 25: 9727. <https://doi.org/10.22605/RRH9727>

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Introduction: The recruitment and retention of allied health professionals (AHPs) in rural and remote locations is a worldwide challenge. However, there has been limited investment in strategies specific to AHPs compared with their medicine and nursing counterparts. This is in part due to an absence of research seeking to understand the unique challenges and opportunities that exist for the allied health rural workforce that can underpin strategies and actions. To address this gap, we have recently undertaken research to discover what AHPs identify as the attractive aspects of living and working rurally.

Methods: An interpretive descriptive methodology¹ was utilised to develop practical, actionable recommendations to support line managers, recruiters, employing organisations, tertiary providers, professional associations and registering bodies as they work to better resource rural health systems. Ethics approval was obtained via Auckland University of Technology: reference number 18/424

Results: This e-poster offers 20 recommendations built from the narratives of rural AHPs and foreground by the recent COVID and Health System Reform context in Aotearoa. These recommendations link to the themes that were developed from the data; Connection and Belonging, Safe and Supported Practice, Creating Roles People Want to Come For, and the interweaving theme of Fit.

Table 1. Recommendations

Themes and Subthemes	Recommendation	Audience
Connection & Belonging: Feeling Cared About Fit	<i>Networking and knowing your community</i> Become a resource about your communities for your people	Line Managers
Connection & Belonging: Feeling Cared About Safe & Supported Practice: Relationship with Leader(ship)	<i>Finding balance, and role modelling boundaries</i> Creating micro-moments that build a sense of safety and belonging Lean into flexibility and transparency instead of consistency and equality of rule application Support skills building for navigating work and personal community relationships	Line Managers
Safe & Supported Practice: Relationship with Leader(ship) Connection & Belonging: Feeling Cared About	<i>Time spent walking in their shoes</i> Make a regular practice of spending time in the remote environments where your workforce is based	Line Managers
Creating Roles People Want to Come For: Freedom & Scope Safe & Supported Practice: Relationship with Leader(ship) Connection & Belonging: Feeling Cared About	<i>Building trust benefits everyone</i> Assume good intent from the outset Promote reciprocal relationships (tuakana-teina [†])	Line Managers
Safe & Supported Practice: Relationship with Leader(ship) Connection & Belonging: Feeling Cared About Creating Roles People Want to Come For: Growth Pathways AND Freedom & Scope	<i>Enhancing management and leadership attributes</i> Invest in ongoing leadership development	Line Managers
Fit	<i>The Reasonableness Test</i> Check for biases and other habits of thinking	Line Managers
Safe & Supported Practice: Valuing Learning	<i>Apportioning resource</i> Matching investment to each of the workforces equitably and with population benefits in mind	Line Managers
Safe & Supported Practice: Valuing Learning	<i>Demonstrating AHPs' learning needs are valued</i> Create, brand, and promote learning with each workforce in mind	Organisations
Safe & Supported Practice: Valuing Learning Connection & Belonging: Feeling Cared About Creating Roles People Want to Come For: Growth Pathways	<i>Fit for purpose policies and procedures</i> Visible, transparent, accessible, and fair	Organisations
Safe & Supported Practice: Relationship with Leader(ship) Connection & Belonging: Feeling Cared About	<i>Are you an ally for rural and remote AHPs?</i> How you represent your rural colleagues and services to others matters	Organisations
Connection & Belonging Safe & Supported Practice	<i>Who is missing from this process?</i> Assumptions limit progress, and affect quality	Organisations
Fit	<i>Are they safe?</i> aka The Reasonableness Test (see above)	Organisations
Connection & Belonging: Feeling Cared About	<i>The human impact</i> Impacts on identity, and wellbeing	Organisations
Connection & Belonging: Feeling Cared About Creating Roles people want to come for: Recruitment Experiences Fit	<i>A window into the culture of an organisation</i> Treat every candidate as though they will solve all of the organisation's recruitment needs	Recruiters
Connection & Belonging: Feeling Cared About Creating Roles people want to come for: Recruitment Experiences	<i>Knowing your audience</i> Learn about all the professions who come under the Allied Health, Scientific & Technical umbrella; what they do, who they are, what matters to them	Recruiters
Connection & Belonging: Feeling Cared About Creating Roles People Want to Come For: Recruitment Experiences Connection & Belonging: Personal Relationships	<i>Creating opportunities to connect</i> Line up start dates for multiple new hires	Recruiters
Creating Roles people want to come for: Lifespan of Roles	<i>Identifying patterns</i> Collect, analyse, and make visible workforce data in meaningful ways	Recruiters
Connection & Belonging: Feeling Cared About Creating Roles people want to come for: Growth Pathways AND Freedom and Scope	<i>Recognise and Endorse a Rural Scope of Practice</i> Establish mechanisms to recognise rural practice as an extended/specialist scope of practice and a pathway for endorsement	Professional Associations and Regulatory Authorities
Creating Roles people want to come for: Growth Pathways	<i>Is city-based training the only way?</i> Develop ways to connect knowledge, skills and qualifications with learners who are rurally located	Tertiary Education Providers
Safe & Supported Practice: Valuing Learning	<i>Rural Generalism</i> Develop rural generalist pathways for individual professions and transdisciplinary	Tertiary Education Providers

[†]Tuakana-teina is a concept from *te ao Māori* and refers to the relationship between an older (*tuakana*) person and a younger (*teina*) person. Within teaching and learning contexts, this can take a variety of forms such as peer to peer, younger to older, older to younger, or able/expert to less able/expert and is a reciprocal learning relationship².

Discussion: These recommendations demonstrate a multi-faceted approach is required to secure the workforce already in place, attract new staff and build the workforce of the future, enabling rural people to grow up well, live well and age well in rural spaces.

References

- 1 Thorne S. *Interpretive description: qualitative research for applied practice*. New York, USA: Routledge, 2016.
- 2 Te Kete Ipurangi. *The concept of a tuakana–teina relationship*. Wellington, New Zealand: Ministry of Education, 2023. Available: <https://tereomaori.tki.org.nz/Curriculum-guidelines/Teaching-and-learning-te-reo-Maori/Aspects-of-planning/The-concept-of-a-tuakana-teina-relationship>

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