Where do they go? Methodology and lessons from collaborative allied health graduate tracking research


Background
- There is a maldistribution of allied health workforce in rural and regions of Australia
- Little is known about why graduates decide to practise in a rural location
- Influences may include rural origin, rural placement and rural job opportunities

What is this study about?
The Nursing and Allied Health Graduate Outcomes Tracking (NAHGOT) study is a joint research project between Monash University School of Rural Health and The University of Newcastle Department of Rural Health across Victoria and New South Wales.

See: NAHGOT study website

The aim is ...
... to compare ‘preferred practice location’ of undergrads with post-graduate ‘principal practice location’.

Methods
Design: Longitudinal and cross-sectional data linkage.
Sample: Students enrolled in Nursing & Allied programmes at Monash University (MU) and the University of Newcastle (UON).
Data sources:
- Existing university enrolment and clinical placement data
- Online surveys of Year 1 and Final Year students
- Follow-up graduate surveys up to 10 years
- Access to Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency (AHPRA) registration data
Data analysis: Data linkage and comparative analysis.

Significance for Allied Health
- Compares outcomes for all students and graduates.
- Tracks the background, intentions, experience and outcomes for allied health graduates.
- Informs curriculum improvement and workforce planning, particularly for rural and remote regions.

Lessons Learned
Opportunities
- Previously successful collaboration between universities
- Common goal to increase rural allied health workforce
- Wider Faculty support for project and potential study findings
- Adding of tracking questions to SES and GOS* (*SES Student Experience Survey/ GOS Graduate Outcome Survey)

Challenges
- Data linkage across multiple sources
  - Cooperation of admissions and professional placement units
  - Collaborative agreement with AHPRA
  - Database sharing & management
  - Data process and code book changes
- Limitations of online surveys
  - Timing of collection
  - Low response rate
  - Missing data

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