LEADING THE REBIRTH OF THE RURAL OBSTETRICIAN

Dr James Brown 1, Dr David Simon 1, Mrs Sari Young 2, Assoc Prof Leigh Kinsman 2
1 Southern General Practice Training, 2 Monash University

Background:
Rural and remote communities are significantly disadvantaged in their access to obstetric services. A low proportion of obstetricians and GP obstetricians conduct procedural obstetrics outside Australian metropolitan cities. This is compounded by the diminishing Victorian GP and specialist obstetric workforce. To improve access, it is critical to address the rural shortage of practicing GP Obstetricians and to encourage GP registrars to train in rural obstetrics. In 2005 Southern General Practice Training (SGPT) introduced a multifaceted training model to enhance high quality recruitment, training and support to influence uptake of rural obstetric practice. The model incorporates hospital and community work with ongoing training and supervision for four different target groups who have varying levels of obstetric experience.

Aims/objective:
The aim of the research is to evaluate the impact of participation in the SGPT program on the subsequent decisions trainees make regarding obstetrics service delivery in a rural area.

Methods/approach:
Twenty four training program participants took part in semi-structured, in-depth, face-to-face interviews. Topics covered included the reasons for choosing obstetric practice; challenges to rural practice; how the SGPT model influenced decisions regarding offering obstetric services; and perceptions regarding whether the program resulted in more doctors undertaking procedural obstetrics and the impact on their workload. Transcribed interviews were thematically analysed by two independent researchers and cross-analysed to ensure credibility of findings.

Results/findings:
The findings increase knowledge regarding obstetric training models and the challenges faced by rural GP obstetricians. The preliminary findings will richly describe different levels of GP obstetricians’ decisions and experiences upon completion of the training.

Discussion:
Rural obstetric service provision is of paramount importance given the shortage of GP obstetricians practising procedural obstetrics. Addressing the current shortage of GP registrars trained in rural obstetrics and, importantly, retaining these doctors in practice, will ensure better access to an essential service for rural families.