CHILDHOOD OBESITY IN RURAL QUEENSLAND: HOW BIG IS THE PROBLEM?
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Background
The prevalence of overweight and obesity in children has been increasing in regional Australia1,2 and is related to the socioeconomic status of the community3. Childhood obesity is associated with increased morbidity2 and obese children are more likely to remain obese into adulthood2, therefore this trend is of major concern2. Few studies have specifically examined the prevalence of childhood obesity in rural populations3. Effective management of obesity in children usually requires multidisciplinary care3,5, however such services may be lacking or inaccessible in rural communities6,7.

Aims
- To compare the prevalence of childhood obesity in rural south-west Queensland to a nearby regional centre
- To explore the issues faced by rural GPs managing obese children.

Method
We aim to have five rural and three regional invited practices participate. Anonymised epidemiological data collected from the four-year-old health check will be grouped into rural vs regional, and analysed to compare the prevalence of obese children in each setting. Community profiles will be examined to comment on the demographics, socioeconomic status and accessibility of health services. GPs from the rural practices will be interviewed regarding their management of obese children. A thematic analysis will be used to identify common issues in the management of childhood obesity in rural areas.

Results
To follow.

Discussion
Childhood obesity is prevalent in young children in rural south-west Queensland. It is associated with lower socioeconomic status and poor accessibility of health services in rural areas. This is a major public health concern.

References


Williams J, Wake M, Hesketh K, Maher E & Waters E. Health-Related Quality of Life of Overweight and Obese Children. JAMA, 2005 Jan 5; 293, No. 1 (Reprinted)
