

## Building capacity in the rural physiotherapy workforce: a paediatric training partnership.

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The projects described aimed to build capacity in the rural physiotherapy workforce through a paediatric training partnership in the Goulburn Valley in Victoria. Implemented was an innovative, targeted, professional training program designed as a recruitment and retention initiative. Two grants, the first philanthropic, another an Australian Government National Rural Primary Health Project, enabled four physiotherapists to complete advanced clinical training programs, in full time roles, for six to twelve months with experienced paediatric physiotherapists. This included academic and professional development. Partners were the university, the major regional health service, government and non-government health sectors, paediatricians, and families. Outcomes were: thirteen applications for four training positions, thus indicating a powerful recruitment strategy; positive responses to surveys from trainees, supervisors and parents; a long vacant position in the disability sector was filled; two new paediatric physiotherapy services were established in regional health services; leadership was provided in a state wide rural paediatric rehabilitation service; and, capacity for student supervision was significantly increased. The training program had the dual effect of providing a career path to young health professionals whilst enhancing children's access to timely, skilled physiotherapy services. Children with disabilities and their families benefited by improved access to more specialist services locally. This meant that they did not have to be on long waiting lists or have to travel to metropolitan services for treatment. This training model may be applied in other regions, to other specialty areas of physiotherapy and to other health professions.