

LETTER TO THE EDITOR

Rural health outreach training

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Dear Editor

I have read various community health articles in *Rural and Remote Health*, and have noticed that many universities offer programs in public health/public health dentistry. I would like to bring to your attention the situation in India.

In India, postgraduate studies are provided in various specialties, for instance community medicine or public health. In the community medicine and public health courses, doctors and dentists are trained for a period of 3 years, mainly in epidemiology and disease prevention. Other core areas of training include planning, management, survey procedures, sociology and biostatistics.

Associated field training involves participation in regular treatment camps, where postgraduate students and community medicine staff visit rural and remote areas in mobile units. From such units, treatment of common ailments, immunizations and health education is provided free of cost to those who have no access to medical and dental care.

Dental camps are supported by sponsorship and conducted in accessible public buildings, such as government-owned schools. Treatments provided include extractions, restorative procedures such as amalgam and temporary fillings, sealant applications, pedodontic procedures and oral prophylaxis. Atraumatic restorative treatment procedures are also conducted.

The benefits of such rural outreach experiences are great for both patients and postgraduate health students. In this instance, Western universities should follow India's example in utilizing field training for tomorrow's successful public health professionals.

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