

'Unlock the power' of remote training

BY SHAH SAHARI

The success of the remote vocational training scheme (RVTS) in training doctors for rural medicine suggests that it is time to extend the scheme to other health professionals, says Professor Richard Hays.

Professor Hays, one of the pioneers of remote training for GPs, where registrars are trained in remote locations under the supervision of senior doctors located elsewhere, floated the idea in his keynote speech.

Professor Hays, who is dean of health sciences and medicine at Bond University, said it was now time to "unlock the power" of remote supervision to help develop the broader rural health workforce.

Rural communities were still poorly served by other health professionals such as specialists, nurses, physiotherapists, occupa-



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professional panel supervising, from a distance, a multi-professional group of trainees.

This training group would consist of some working full time (eg, the doctor and nurse) and others (such as speech pathologists and physiotherapists) visiting from time to time. The training activities would be focused on patient need and the professionals in town at the time.

There will be challenges, he concedes, citing the differences in professional training needs and certification, 'turf war' issues, as well as resourcing.

But he suggested a clear conceptual model needed to be piloted with funding to prove it works – "but I can't see why it can't work".

tional therapists and speech pathologists, he said.

"So what we need to be doing is training all the health professions in how to work in rural regions.

"We have to look beyond medicine. One of my interests is interprofessional education and I have to say we are failing to do this well. It's very hard to do this well at undergraduate level, and I think it's actually

better at postgraduate level."

And the rural setting would be the ideal for doing it because "rural practice is one of the most team-work-based, interprofessional-rich styles of practice in the country".

The key, he says, will be periods of "immersion" in rural and regional practice without an on-site supervisor. The training model he envisages would comprise a multi-

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