Mapping of Rural Health-Care Services

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Objective. The availability of health services in rural areas creates challenges for the existing providers and health consumers, including processes of medication supply and management. In preparation for an exploratory study of these issues, we aimed to identify 1) a suitable community to study, and 2) the health services operating in this community.

Methods. 1) Criteria for selection included rural and remote classification, demographic profile and knowledge of preliminary health services data for shires in Southern Queensland. 2) Services in the identified area were identified by systematic Internet searches, hard-copy directories and Government databases and then confirmed by telephone calls, using snowballing techniques to saturation.

Results. A community comprising four towns in the Darling Downs region was selected for study. Searches followed by direct contact with health providers generated a list of 35 types of health services, from which the towns were serviced by 43 full-time, 17 part-time and 103 visiting health-care providers and affiliated organisations.

Discussion. Further refinement will identify those providers specifically aligned with medication services and any overlap between providers servicing these towns. Additional providers may be identified during community-based data collection exploring the providers’ roles in medication supply and management.

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