



Variety of interest in rural surgery

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Trainees should be encouraged to consider regional practice which can deliver a range of benefits, including less time on call, greater opportunities for access to theatre, the ability to provide outreach services and the capacity to establish private practice, according to an article in the latest *ANZ Journal of Surgery*.

They should also consider the needs of the community in which they intend to practice, enabling them to learn the broad range of skills needed.

Co-author Mr Stephen Franzi believes there is much more scope in rural practice than people are led to believe.

“The provision of adequate services to rural Australia remains an ongoing issue with the continued struggle to attract and retain appropriately-trained surgeons to long-term practice.

“The range of skills required by rural surgeons is determined by the co-location of surgeons of other specialties, the frequency of their visits and the proximity to other centres with surgical specialty cover,” Mr Stephen Franzi said.

“Surgeons working in rural towns should consider outreach to smaller towns to increase service provision to these towns, and in return for this receive extra theatre time and professional association with local doctors working in these areas.

“The data from this study demonstrate the benefit of working in a larger rural centre compared to a smaller one.”

A retrospective review of the work of two general surgeons working from a base in Wangaratta between 2006 and 2010 showed that 18,029 procedures were performed in five years covering a full range of operations. The review also included outreach services to Benalla, Bright and Mansfield.

The surgeons were two of four general surgeons serving the area. Surgeon A performed a total of 10,322 cases, including 5,189 endoscopies, while surgeon B performed 7,707 cases, including 540 endoscopies. The procedures were performed in a range of theatre settings, including Northeast Health Wangaratta, Wangaratta Private and others at peripheral hospitals and outpatient rooms.

The surgeons included in the study had a higher workload compared to some in other rural areas such as Horsham, Hamilton, Echuca and Sale, due to the opportunity for private practice and outreach work.

The *ANZ Journal of Surgery*, published by Wiley-Blackwell, is the pre-eminent surgical journal published in Australia, New Zealand and the South-East Asian region. The Journal is dedicated to the promotion of outstanding surgical practice, and research of contemporary and international interest.



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