

# **Evaluation of the Bridging the Rural Gap On-line Program**

Sue Taylor, Greg Ryan

Faculty of Pharmacy, The University of Sydney

## **AIM**

This program is designed to develop in all health science students at the University of Sydney an understanding of the health issues of rural/remote and Indigenous Australians. The University's e-Learning scheme and two university grants are supporting the development, evaluation and embedding of the program in all curricula in the Faculties of Health. The program was trialed and evaluated with first and fourth year Pharmacy students in 2008 before a roll out to other faculties in 2009.

## **METHOD**

All (n=280) students in first year Pharmacy used the program as part of a tutorial supported by two lectures and the material was assessed in the final examination. Those fourth year students who went on a rural block placement (n=150) used the program as part of their placement activities and assessment. All students were invited to complete a questionnaire in which they were asked to strongly agree/agree/disagree or strongly disagree with 10 statements about the program. They were also encouraged to write comments to qualify each statement and give general comments.

## **OUTCOMES**

Sixty eight percent of first year students and 69% of the fourth year students agreed or strongly agreed that the program was a useful learning resource and over 70% in each group agreed or strongly agreed that the program had increased their understanding of rural and remote health issues. Comments indicated that clearer instructions for students and assessment commensurate with time spent were required. The positive feedback and constructive criticism will be taken into account in the roll out.