

Geographically, Australia is one of the largest countries in the world. While much of our population lives in urbanised areas with relatively close access to health services, health policy research and planning must consider the specific needs of people and communities in rural and remote Australia.

‘There is no one homogenised group of people, or type of community that represents all of rural and remote Australia,’ says Australian Health Review Editor-in-Chief Dr Sonj Hall.

‘Different regions and even individual communities will have specific healthcare needs. This adds to the challenge of planning health service delivery, and we can’t always expect what works for urban areas to work in the same way for rural and remote areas.’

‘While also covering topics such as digital health, palliative and end of life care, and health workforce, the October 2023 issue of the [Australian Health Review](#) spotlights health policy research with a focus on rural and remote healthcare.’

In this issue, research examines the importance of considering rural and remote contexts across different states, comparing outcomes from use of the Health Care Homes algorithm to help predict patients' risk of hospitalisation when interacting with primary healthcare. While the algorithm resulted in better outcomes for study cohorts in Victoria, for First Nation patients based in remote areas of the Northern Territory, it didn’t adequately account for factors such as previous hospitalisations.

Dr Hall also noted that ‘Access to services is often a barrier to people receiving care in regional areas. Even without the added pressures of the current cost of living crisis, receiving a cancer diagnosis can create a substantial financial burden, especially for rural and remote patients who may have difficulty accessing treatment nearby.’

‘It can also affect a patient’s ability to participate in clinical trials with life-saving potential. A recent clinical trials assistance pilot featured in this issue, examined the effect of providing financial assistance to cancer patients living in regional NSW in trial participation.

‘By creating a pathway for patients who otherwise wouldn’t be able to participate in trials due to the added cost of travel and accommodation, it could help to reduce the inequalities faced by rural and remote cancer patients.

‘Growing the capabilities of Australia’s healthcare workforce is also vital in improving access for people and communities in rural and remote areas.

‘Following the release of the federal government’s ‘The National Rural and Remote Nursing Generalist Framework 2023-2027’, researchers from the Deakin Rural Health, School of Medicine, urge policymakers to leverage Rural Health Multidisciplinary Training program and its national network of universities to expand the rural and remote nursing workforce.’

The online version of this [media release](#) and links to the Australian Health Review can be found on the AHHA website. **The Australian Healthcare and Hospitals Association (AHHA) is the independent peak membership body and advocate for the Australian healthcare system and a national voice for universally accessible, high-quality healthcare in Australia.**

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