

Developing the Rural Medical Workforce through Intern Rural Rotations

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Introduction

Addressing the shortage of rural practitioners is crucial for improving health outcomes in rural Australia. Previous studies highlight the importance of rural exposure in shaping medical students' career paths, but this is understudied in Trainee Medical Officers. We aimed to assess the impact of rural placement on future career trajectory, and to assess the impact of a rural placement on their learning and understand perceived advantages and disadvantages to a rural career.

Results

Between January 2022 and January 2024, 75 (53%) of 142 interns participated in rural rotations. Survey responses were received from 42 (30%) interns at commencement of internship and 39 (27%) at the end of their internship, with 27 (19%) responding at both points. Of these, 18 (67%) completed a rural rotation.

Interns with rural rotations reported a mean preparedness score of 5.7 (1.2) for independent patient care, compared to 6.6

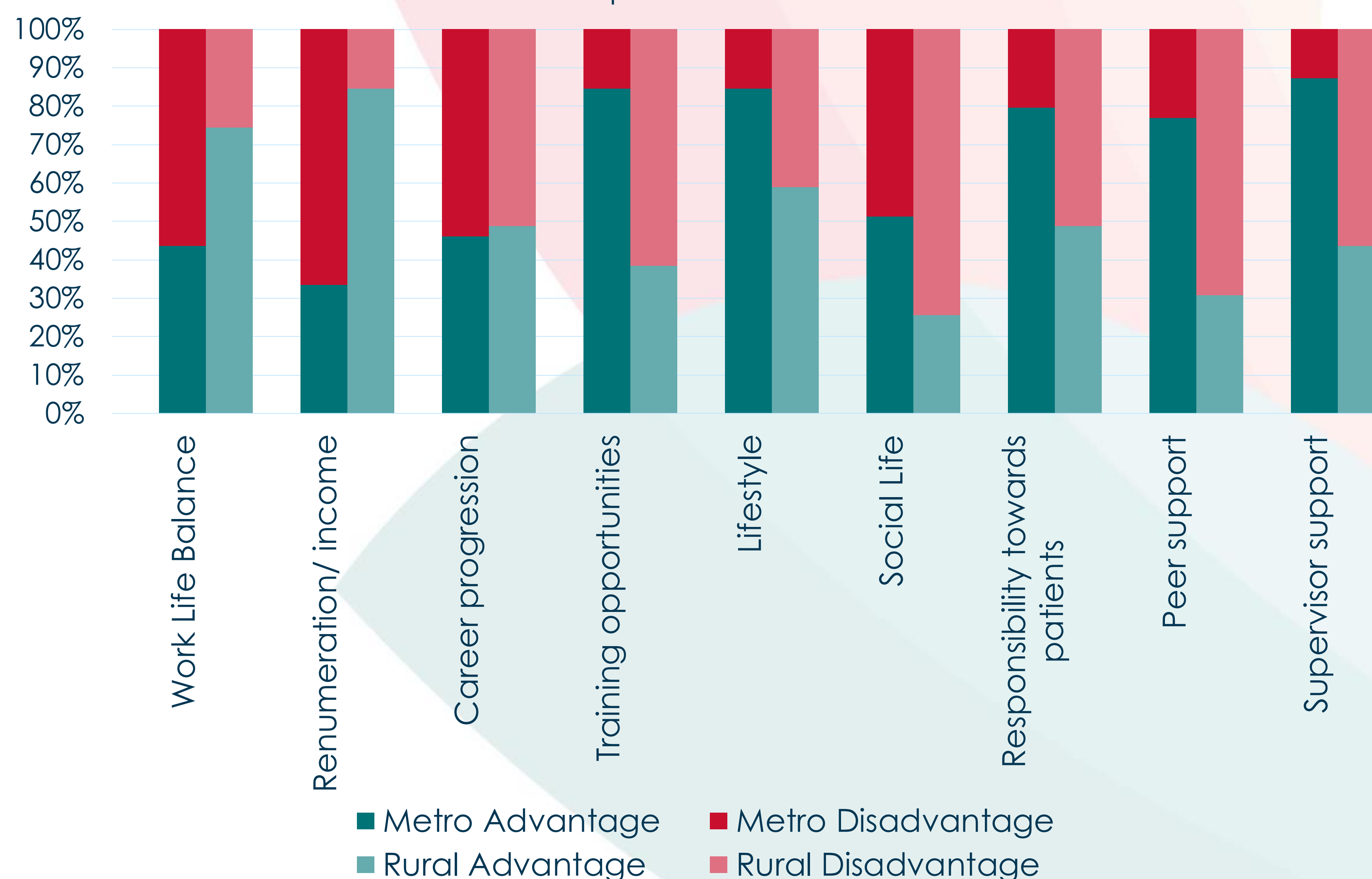
(1.1) for those without rural rotations ($p=0.82$). The likelihood of pursuing a rural career was higher among those with rural experience, with a mean score of 5.8 (2.4) versus 4.0 (3.1) for those without ($p=0.05$). Perceptions of the advantages of metro and rural rotations are shown below.



Methods

The Northern Adelaide Local Health Network (NALHN) implemented a hub-and-spoke model, offering rural rotations to metro interns through Memorandums of Understanding with rural health services and through the Rural Doctors Workforce Agency's Road to Rural program. This model combines rural experience with specialist-led metropolitan education delivered via online platforms. While also providing wellbeing support through the NALHN Medical Education Unit. The interns completed voluntary surveys at the beginning and end of their internship to assess prior rural experience, preparedness for independent practice, perceived advantages of rural careers, and career intentions.

Perceived advantages and disadvantages of rural and metro placements



Conclusion

Rural rotations for trainee medical officers significantly increase the likelihood of choosing a rural career.

