

The biggest thing is we're not paid enough...I lose bulk billing \$270 a day! : Examining Alcohol and Other Drugs Nurse Practitioner (AODNP) experiences delivering Pharmacotherapy Treatments in regional Victoria

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Introduction / Issues: Despite, Victorian government's AOD workforce policy calling for greater recruitment of AODNPs, frontline organizations in Victoria involved in Pharmacotherapy treatments anecdotally report a number of systemic barriers to recruitment and retention. Furthermore, there is scant Australian literature that focuses on the professional experiences of AODNP roles in pharmacotherapy provision that specifically uses a regional/rural lens. This research aims to address this gap by examining the AODNP workforce issues in delivering pharmacotherapy treatments in regional/rural areas of Victoria.

Method / Approach: The study design included, conducting a scoping review of existing literature on AODNP's in the international, national and state context, open ended surveys and qualitative in-depth interviews with AODNP's working in regional Victoria. The interviews were coded and thematically analysed.

Key Findings OR Results: The findings from the qualitative interviews with AODNPs generated three themes—education and professional training, system level barriers, and facilitators to increasing AODNP workforce. Majority felt that stigma towards pharmacotherapy clients and lack of state/federal funding at community and hospital level of pharmacotherapy treatments and inadequate financial reimbursement acted as significant barriers to recruitment. Some reported satisfaction with the advocacy and training support provided by regional pharmacotherapy area-based networks.

Discussions and Conclusions: As a way of conclusion, we suggest, despite, systemic barriers, including lack of longer and/or inadequate funding of pharmacotherapy treatments, deep seated stigmatising attitudes carried by professionals across the health system towards pharmacotherapy clients and gaps in accessing regular and timely professional mentoring and training—AODNP's professional commitment and motivation to serve clients highlights the significant role AODNP's play in pharmacotherapy provision.

Implications for Practice or Policy: The AOD policy implications relate to the urgent need to adequately fund AODNP positions on a long-term basis that service increasing demand for pharmacotherapy treatments and increase opportunities for adequate professional mentoring and training of AODNP's in regional/rural areas will assist with recruitment and retention.

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