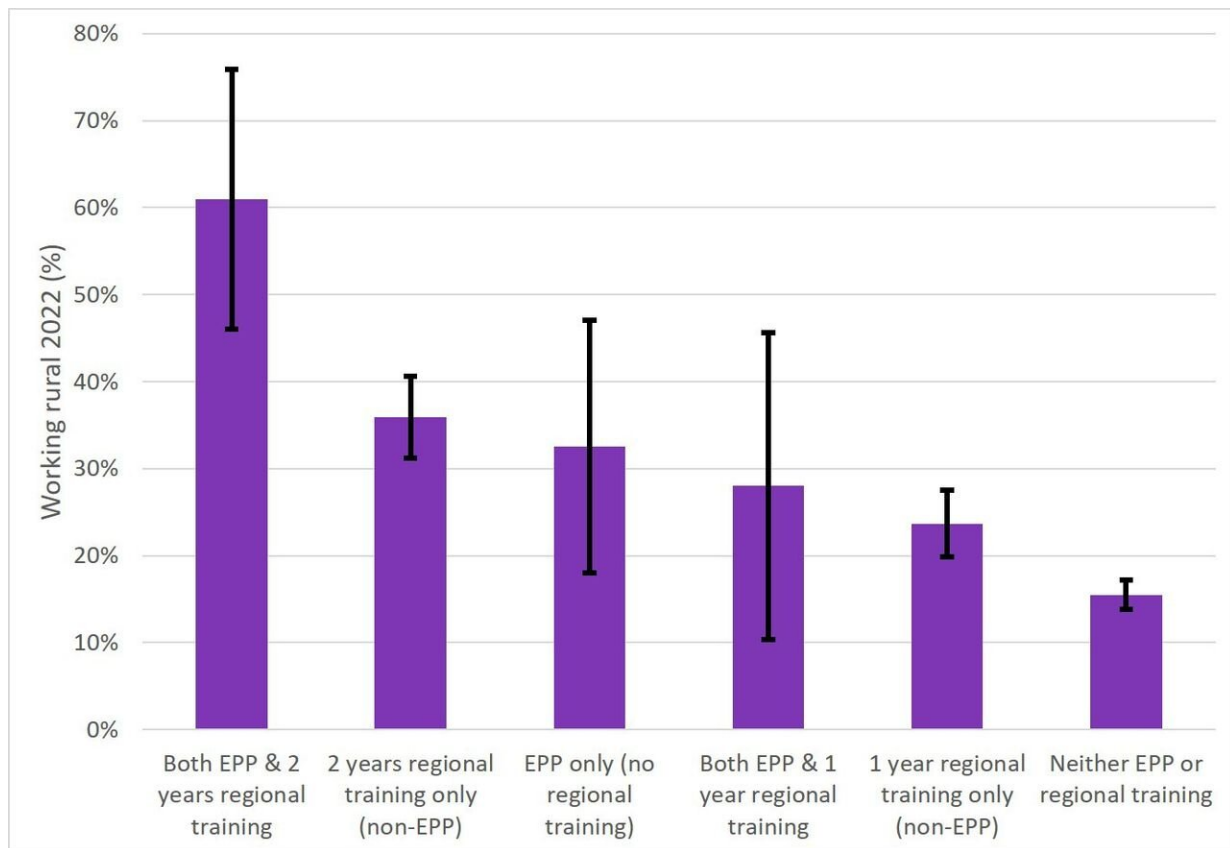


Extended rural placements can help students become country doctors

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Extended Placement Program (EPP) participants (%) working rurally in 2022. Credit: *BMJ Open* (2023). DOI: 10.1136/bmjopen-2022-068704

University of Queensland medical students who completed a 12-week training program in a rural or remote area were more likely to work as

doctors in similar communities, a study has shown.

Researchers at UQ's Rural Clinical School (UQRCS) and Mayne Academy of Rural and Remote Medicine examined data on the career outcomes of 2,806 [medical students](#) who graduated between 2012 and 2021.

Head of the Mayne Academy of Rural and Remote Medicine, Professor Bruce Chater said almost all students completed a minimum six weeks [training](#) in a rural or [remote area](#), while some participated in a 12-week program or combined a 12-week placement with a one to two-year training program in a larger regional center.

"The findings show students who participated in a 12-week placement in a small rural town were around three times more likely to work in a similar-sized community after graduating," Professor Chater said.

"Those who combined a 12-week placement with a two-year training program were around seven times more likely to work in a small rural or [remote location](#)."

A shortage of doctors, particularly in small rural and remote towns is a problem impacting the health and well-being of people in these communities.

UQRCS Head of Regional Training Hubs Research and study lead author, Associate Professor Matthew McGrail said the study pointed to a simple way to build the medical workforce in the regions.

"The 12-week extended [placement](#) program positively influenced workforce outcomes," Dr. McGrail said. "This was irrespective of whether the students had grown up in a rural location or not.

"Using actual workforce outcomes that have been measured up to 10 years post-graduation gives certainty that working in a rural or remote area is a career choice, not just an intention. The finding helps support placements as an integral part of future planning for medical workforces in rural and remote communities."

The study used data from the Australian Health Practitioner Regulation Agency and was conducted in collaboration with Dr. Bushra Nasir, Dr. Bahram Sangelaji and Associate Professor Srinivas Kondalsamy-Chennakesavan.

The paper is published in *BMJ Open*.

More information: Matthew R McGrail et al, The value of extended short-term medical training placements in smaller rural and remote locations on future work location: a cohort study, *BMJ Open* (2023). [DOI: 10.1136/bmjopen-2022-068704](https://doi.org/10.1136/bmjopen-2022-068704)

Provided by University of Queensland

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