

# Gray nomads with diabetes need to be more prepared before hitting the road

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Older Australians with diabetes who embark on caravanning holidays need to ensure they are well prepared to manage their condition while away so as not to put undue pressure on regional pharmacists, a new

Flinders University study has found.

Led by Dr. Anita De Bellis from Flinders' College of Nursing and Health Sciences, the researchers explored the perspectives of rural and remote pharmacists who had provided services to gray nomads with diabetes.

The findings showed the remote and rural settings impacted the availability of timely and quality health services, requiring pharmacists to fill the gap—something for which they should be compensated for, the authors argue.

"The most common issues encountered were around the dispensing of medications, often because they had been left behind, and the need to update equipment and supplies for blood glucose monitoring," says Dr. De Bellis.

"The pharmacists described scripts being out of date, supplies and equipment not being easily sourced due to their [remote location](#) and gray nomad's referrals to the National Diabetes Supplies Scheme (NDSS) having expired."

Other issues raised included not having the capacity or training to assist the individuals, some of whom had been traveling for long periods away from their primary health care provider.

"While some travelers were well prepared, the pharmacists reported that many were not, and assumed any regional pharmacy was going to be well stocked and able to provide medical guidance around their diabetes management, something they should be speaking with their GP about," says Dr. De Bellis.

The authors say the findings highlight that improvements could be made across the board to support both pharmacists and gray nomads.

"Firstly, as well as continuing professional development modules for pharmacists on [diabetes management](#), there is a need for appropriate compensation for pharmacists providing specialized care to gray nomads, recognizing the additional workload and expertise required," says Dr. De Bellis.

Dr. De Bellis adds, "Expanding digital health tools, such as the My Health Record and telehealth services, to include pharmacists could enhance continuity of care, ensuring that gray nomads have access to their health records and professional advice regardless of their location while traveling.

"Finally, the development of comprehensive pre-travel checklists for gray [nomads](#) could improve preparation and self-management, reducing the demand on rural health services.

"As Australia's aging population grows, we can assume the gray nomad population will grow too, so enhanced support for pharmacists alongside assistance for travelers to better prepare and self-manage their condition will ensure sustainable health services for regional and remote communities."

The paper, "[Rural and remote pharmacists' perspectives of grey nomads with diabetes traveling in Australia](#)," is published in the *Australian Journal of Rural Health*.

**More information:** Anita De Bellis et al, Rural and remote pharmacists' perspectives of grey nomads with diabetes travelling in Australia, *Australian Journal of Rural Health* (2024). [DOI: 10.1111/ajr.13139](#)

Provided by Flinders University

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