HR in remote Australia
Why they leave, why they stay, and the role that managers play.

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Alice Springs, November 2016
A Little bit about me ...
We know that ...

- Populations living remote regions of Australia have poorer health outcomes than those who live in cities.
- Access to appropriate health services improves health outcomes.
- High turnover of health professionals.
- Predicted global health workforce shortages.
- Remote workforces face additional challenges.
‘Thus, the task is not so much to see what no one yet has seen, but to think what nobody yet has thought about that which everybody sees.’

Arthur Schopenhauer  
(1788-1860)
Theoretical Framework

The copyright for framework is not held by the author.

The framework is available in the following publication:


<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Reasons for Leaving</th>
<th>Reasons for Staying</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td><strong>Travel</strong>, exhausting and time consuming</td>
<td><strong>Travel</strong>, experiencing amazing country</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professional Isolation</strong>, sole practitioner</td>
<td><strong>Autonomy</strong>, sole practitioner</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Challenging</strong>, no peer support,</td>
<td><strong>Challenging</strong>, self reliant, responsibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Family and friends</strong>, living away from them</td>
<td><strong>Family and friends</strong>, sense of community</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Lifestyle</strong>, excessive on-call hours</td>
<td><strong>Lifestyle</strong>, community respect, flexibility</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Limited resources</strong>, infrastructure and lack of equipment</td>
<td><strong>Limited resources</strong>, creativity, community spirit</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Professional Development</strong>, access, paid leave, limited career paths</td>
<td><strong>Professional Development</strong>, opportunities that would not be available in the city</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td><strong>Management</strong>, they don’t know what we do out here</td>
<td><strong>Management</strong>, they don’t know what we do out here</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
Psychological Contract Theory

An individual employee’s beliefs about their employment relationship and ‘what they think they are entitled to receive because of real or perceived promises’ from their employer’

(Bartlett, 2001, p.337).
Mixed Methods Research Study

- Interviews (n=24)
- Online Questionnaire (n=213)
- Recruitment Advertising (n=3311)

- Remote Health Professionals
- Tropical Northern Australia
Attraction

Data in a paper currently under review.
Recruitment

‘There are always people who are going to be wanting to go out there and work in this really amazing complex unique environment, that's not the challenge. The recruitment isn't the challenge it’s the retention and the retention is about management’ (IP18)
‘People leave managers, not companies.’

‘If you have a turnover problem, look first to your managers.’

(Buckingham & Coffman, 1999, p.27)
‘I don't think we get too many people with management experience applying for management jobs. We usually recruit inexperienced managers more often than not and try to develop them and we don't do very well in developing them’ (IP10)
Transition to Management

‘As soon as you put on a managers hat there is an expectation that you just get on with it’ (IP18)

‘We promote clinicians as good clinicians into management positions and then we don't support them with any management education’ (IP10).
Remote Manager positions

Health service management positions advertised for remote northern Australia, August 2013 – July 2015 (n=348).

Data in a paper currently under review.

Preliminary statistics available in:

http://researchonline.jcu.edu.au/38223/
Managers are the Key

‘I realised that you can get just as much pleasure, and job satisfaction through doing a good job in management as you can as a clinician’ (M-18)
Social Exchange Theory

Social exchange theory suggests that the quality of the employee-manager relationship impacts on several employee outcomes including job satisfaction, commitment and turnover.

(Xerri, 2013)
Social Exchange Theory

Two types of social exchange:
- **Perceived Organizational Support (POS)** focuses on the exchange relationship between the employee and the organisation.
- **Leader-Member Exchange (LMX)** emphasises the quality of exchange between the employee and their manager.
The role that managers play ...

‘it just helps to have someone who knows where the communities are what the troubles are, travelling between, how people get there, roads cut off, things like that, someone that understands the little things that make your day a lot harder’ (IP19)
The role that managers play ...

‘I took the turnover rate from 200% a year to basically we had one staff leave in the four and a half years that I was there’ (IP1).

‘It was nice to be able to say I don't have any vacancies at the moment ... We'd turned it around we'd become a unified team, we had respect’ (IP9).
Why they leave, why they stay, and the role that managers play.

... Managers are the key
Everyone contributes

Let’s continue to reframe the discussion until we see the change that we know is possible
Research and Resources

www.helpingremotemanagers.com.au

JCU Research Online (Leigh-ann Onnis)
http://researchonline.jcu.edu.au

Australian Human Resources Institute
www.ahri.com.au
Thank-you
References


