Exploration of rural physicians' lived experience of practising outside their usual scope of practice to provide access to essential medical care (clinical care): an international phenomenological study

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Study Objectives

To explore the lived experience of rural doctors when they practice outside their usual scope of practice to provide medical care for people who would otherwise not have access to essential clinical services.
Methods

• Hermeneutic phenomenological study
• Semi-structured interviews
• Participants in international conference on rural health in predominantly English-speaking communities
Results

- 27 interviews
- broad range of career stages
- countries represented: Australia, Canada, USA, New Zealand, South Africa, Scotland, Papua New Guinea
- 6 elements of clinical courage identified
Standing up to serve anybody & everybody in the community
Accepting uncertainty and persistently seeking to prepare
Deliberately understanding and marshalling resources in context
Humbly seeking to know one's own limits
Clearing the cognitive hurdle when something needs to be done for your patient
Collegial support to stand up again
Conclusion

- Relationships with community & colleagues essential
- Humility & capacity to act required
- Implications both for medical education & professional development of practicing rural physicians