

**Background**

The Rural and Remote Division of Family Practice is pleased to launch a new Rural Locum Team/Co-deployment initiative in collaboration with the Rural Coordination Centre of BC. The program is designed to:

- support physicians throughout the continuum of practice considering work in rural and remote communities
- provide support and practice coverage for vulnerable communities in BC.

**What is team/co-deployment?**

Team/co-deployment is the pairing of two or more physicians to work together in a rural or remote community in need of practice coverage.

Team options include:

- mentor - mentee pairings:
  - mentor: a physician with a strong rural skill set who enjoys sharing their knowledge, experience, and passion for rural and remote practice.
  - mentee: a resident, recent medical graduate, or a physician transitioning in their career who is interested in working in rural or remote communities and would benefit from guidance and support.
- peer support pairings
  - two physicians who choose to locum together for the purposes of collegial support.

**How was early feedback collected?**

Prior to a formal launch of the program, a series of phone interviews were conducted with ten initial participants: two mentors, four locums, three local physicians, and one site manager.

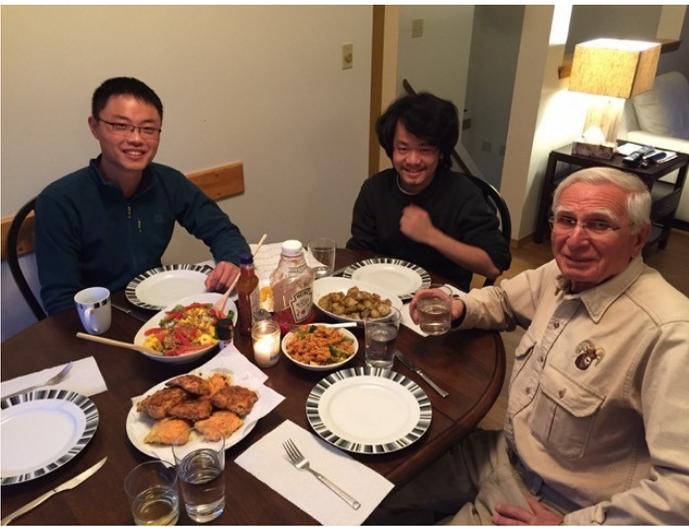
The purpose of the interviews was to assess participants' experiences with co-deployment and provide early input into the design of the program. **Note that these findings represent the views of only a limited number of participants to date and as such should be interpreted with caution.**

**What are some of the early impacts observed?**

Some of the supports provided and initial benefits experienced by locums, mentors, and the local physicians are presented in the matrix below.



	LOCUMS	MENTORS	LOCAL PHYSICIANS
SUPPORT	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• professional support and 24/7 backup</li> <li>• orientation to rural practice issues</li> <li>• social and recreational orientation to the community</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• opportunity to help a young doctor and give something back to the profession</li> <li>• share what they value about the rural BC lifestyle</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• practice coverage</li> <li>• collegial contact with another rural physician</li> <li>• optional teaching for clinic staff provided by mentors</li> </ul>
BENEFITS	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• increased confidence with rural medicine</li> <li>• new skills</li> <li>• reduced isolation and stress</li> <li>• easier transition to community</li> <li>• positive community connections</li> <li>• exposure to social and recreational activities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• enjoyable time spent with enthusiastic younger physicians</li> <li>• time available to provide additional clinical &amp; social supports:                             <ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• teaching &amp; updates on new practices, e.g. in ER</li> <li>• collegial/social time with local physician</li> </ul> </li> <li>• new/better relationships with rural communities</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• opportunity to get to know a locum in advance of longer placement</li> <li>• potential for longer-term recruitment to community</li> <li>• decreased clinic staff workload (mentor orients locum)</li> <li>• decreased isolation, opportunity to connect with rural peers</li> <li>• improved clinic capacity</li> </ul>



### What factors facilitate a successful team co-deployment experience?

Some of the factors contributing to a success team co-deployment identified by those interviewed include:

- mentors having prior experience or training as a mentor
- mentors having familiarity with the community
- locums having a pre-existing relationship with their mentor or locum partner
- locums having familiarity with the community
- opportunities for social experiences and to make social connections in the community
- a nice welcome from the community
- nice accommodation.

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“My experience was great. It was more than just me being there. [My mentee] got out and did some things that they probably wouldn’t have done on their own, including learning to fish.”

Mentor

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### Would they do it again?

All ten locums, mentors, and local physicians interviewed indicated they would not only participate again, but recommend it to their colleagues as well.

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“It’s always nice to have time to catch up with another seasoned rural doctor.”

Local physician

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“You have that built-in peer support, it’s not just you off in the woods by yourself. You have help if you need it, from someone that you can be open with about being inexperienced or uncomfortable. If I hadn’t had the opportunity to do this, I wouldn’t have been as brave about it.”

Locum

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### What have we learned from this initial feedback?

The Rural Locum Team/Co-deployment initiative shows excellent promise in achieving its primary outcome of supporting new physicians interested in rural and remote practice.

There are a number of different variables that go into making a successful team co-deployment, and each community and locum pair is different. The Rural & Remote Division of Family Practice is committed to taking these factors into account as the program develops and grows over time.



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“The experience itself I really enjoyed. I like being associated with the young people, they’re enthusiastic and have energy, and there were ways I helped out professionally. It’s been fun.”

Mentor

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