What does personality tell us about working in the bush? Temperament and character traits of Australian remote allied health professionals

Authors: Narelle Campbell1, Lindy McAllister2, Diann Eley1

1 The University of Queensland
2 The University of Sydney

Context

Recruitment and retention of allied health professionals (AHPs) in remote Australia is problematic. Recent research has shown that urban and rural doctors and nurses can be differentiated by personality traits but little is known about the personality traits of allied health professionals. Understanding the dominant personal traits of remote AHPs may guide development of new strategies to enhance recruitment and retention.

Objective

To describe the personality (temperament and character traits) of remote Australian AHPs.

Design

Cross-sectional cohort design (self-report online survey) with snowball sampling of participants.

Participants

561 Australian AHPs (females n=502) classified into Remote (n=266) and Not Remote (n=295). All completed demographic questions and the Temperament and Character Inventory (TCI R-140).

Main outcome measure(s)

Description of the levels of the seven main temperament and character traits in AHPs.

Results

Remote AHPs were higher in Novelty Seeking (p=.037) and Self-Transcendence (p=0.42). Remote females were lower in Harm Avoidance (p=.042). Older remote AHPs were lower in Reward Dependence (p=.001); younger remote AHPs were lower in Self-Directedness (p=.001) and higher in Harm Avoidance (p<.001). Females were more Reward Dependent (p<.001) and Cooperative (p=.008) than males.

Conclusions

The sample demonstrated personality trait levels that aligned with recent research on rural doctors and nurses and which may be advantageous for working in a challenging environment. Exploring the more stable nature of temperament traits coupled with the
modifiable potential of character traits provides new insight into the basic personality patterns of people who choose to work as a remote AHP. These findings contribute to a better understanding of the dominant personality trends in these AHPs and in turn may provide clues to improve current and future recruitment and retention strategies.