

# PEER SUPPORT FOR RURAL PHYSICIANS INSPIRES CONFIDENCE, INCREASES PROFESSIONAL SATISFACTION, AND IMPROVES COMMUNITY CARE

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**Abstract Title:** Peer support for rural physicians inspires confidence, increases professional satisfaction, and improves community care

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## INTRODUCTION

In partnership with the Rural Coordination Centre of BC, funded by the Joint Standing Committee on Rural Issues, UBC CPD's Rural Peer Support Network (RPSN) fosters peer connections in rural practitioner networks to improve practice, increase confidence, and enhance patient care.

RPSN is available to rural physicians and surgical, obstetrical, and maternity teams. Participants register as a coach or coachee. The program is driven by coachees; coachees identify their areas for support, learning goals, and length of match.

## MEASUREMENT

In 2021, UBC CPD conducted a program evaluation to identify what motivates health care professions to register for RPSN and the perceived value of receiving support through the program. The data collected between 2018 and 2021 from 100 needs assessments and 25 interviews was summarized to quantify needs, identify themes, and learn why individuals join RPSN.

## **RESULTS**

Data available from the needs assessments and interviews provided details about practice type, desired areas for improvement, reasons for pursuing peer support, and more.

Many coaches stated that supporting others was a major motivation for participation, especially to support the well-being, capacity, and excellence of practitioners new to rural practice. Other coaches' motivations to join were professional satisfaction, as a learning experience, and to benefit their community.

When registering, coachees sought opportunities to improve comfort and confidence in applying clinical skills and in practicing in their community/clinical setting. Coachees requested support primarily in the areas of workflow/workplace management, personal wellness, emergency medicine, and transitions in/out of practice.

## **DISCUSSION**

Participants consider peer support an effective way to increase confidence, advance clinical skills, and improve community care. RPSN attracts health care professions who value connecting with fellow rural colleagues and are looking to increase their professional satisfaction, share knowledge, and improve the health of rural communities.