

What do ‘excellent clinical supervisors’ and ‘good students’ look like in clinical outreach settings?

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Community outreach is an increasingly accepted component of pre-service dental education. Outreach programmes involve students working in spaces and with patients outside the dental school setting. In 2012, New Zealand’s only dental school introduced a compulsory outreach programme for final-year students. The programme is unique in that it was developed in collaboration with six (indigenous) Māori Oral Health Providers (MOHPs). The programme is strategic given the disproportionate burden of dental disease within Māori communities and the need to develop an oral health workforce in New Zealand that is responsive to Māori. Research suggests that dental outreach programmes can foster students’ confidence, clinical exposure, holistic thinking, recognition of complexity, and engagement in team-based practice. They may also promote students’ self-awareness, cultural competence, sense of social responsibility, and willingness to serve specific communities post-graduation. However, little research has examined host community perspectives on hosting students, or the ‘border work’ (Somerville and Perkins, 2003) involved in negotiating clinical and social practices across socio-geographical settings. This paper reports on preliminary research findings from an ongoing three-year Kaupapa Māori participatory action research project aimed at evaluating and informing the outreach programme over its initial three years. Specifically, we draw on questionnaire and interview data from the first year of the project in order to examine the following questions: (1) what do students see as ‘excellent clinical supervision’ in community-based settings; (2) what do clinical supervisors and clients see as desirable student attributes; and (3) what factors promote learning, connection and engagement in clinical outreach settings?