

# Supporting rural communities in raising the awareness of men's health issues

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## Aim

We have used the awareness week, International Men's Health Week (IMHW) as a platform for men's health promotion. Our aim was to determine if men's health resource support to organisations is effective at supporting rural and remote communities to raise the awareness of men's health issues.

## Methods

A semi-quantitative survey about the resources and their event was distributed to organisations receiving resources during IMHW 2008. A total of 726 organisations received resource material for their event, with 426 surveys returned (response rate 59%). Organisations were asked if they were in a major city, regional or remote.

## Results

Over half of the events were held in rural and remote areas (57%), compared to major cities (43%). Of those who held an event, most organisations had a display only (73%), while 26% of organisations held a men's health event; this was similar for major cities (event, 23%) and rural and remote areas (event, 25%). The IMHW '*awareness leaflets*' was rated as 'very good' (median, 5) by urban ( $4.4 \pm 0.7$  (SD)) and rural and remote ( $4.5 \pm 0.6$  (SD)) respondents (range: 1=not useful to 5=very good). The information on the awareness leaflet was rated as '*easy*' to read, understand, remember, locate formation and keep for a future reference (each, median 4). Organisations in major cities indicated that the awareness leaflet was easier to '*understand*' ( $4.5 \pm 0.5$  vs  $4.3 \pm 0.6$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ) and '*remember*' ( $4.3 \pm 0.7$  vs  $4.1 \pm 0.7$ ;  $p < 0.05$ ), than organisations in regional and remote areas (range: 1=very hard to 5=very easy). An index (information score, range 1 to 4 (very useful)) on how much and how useful the information was on the resource, was not different between major cities ( $3.5 \pm 0.6$ ) and rural and remotes areas ( $3.6 \pm 0.6$ ).

## Conclusions

Regional and remote areas were a popular setting for events during International Men's Health Week as indicated by over half of the resource requests being from these areas. This is despite only one-third (34%) of the population living in regional and remote Australia, suggesting a high level of engagement with organisations within regional and remote areas. Future health promotion campaigns for men's health need to foster this engagement and ensure that literacy of the resource is directed towards rural and remote communities.

## Presenter

**Carol Holden** is CEO of Andrology Australia, the first national program aimed at raising the awareness of specific men's health issues and associated conditions. The program develops evidence-based community and professional education, including programs in Indigenous men's health. Carol combines her research and management backgrounds with further academic interest in public health and health policy.