

2019 NAFEA Student Scholarship Report

On the 29th of April I began one of my final year clinical placements at the Alice Springs Hospital, for 7 weeks, as part of my undergraduate degree in prosthetics and orthotics. Undertaking a rural placement was something that I was always interested in doing, and now that my placement has finished, I am grateful that I was given this opportunity.

Firstly, there are a certain set of professional skills that are unique to rural settings, especially Alice Springs. One of the biggest skills that I took away from my placement was having the ability to understand the barriers that many of those living in Alice Springs face when accessing healthcare. While some of these barriers were challenging to overcome at times, I developed a greater understanding and approach to collaborative practice, especially with other allied health professionals, to deliver a service that was both suitable and beneficial. Secondly, this experience has contributed to the improvement in my inter-personal communication skills. There were times throughout my placement when I was working with clients where English was a second or third language. Through these interactions, I was able to constantly develop my ability to successfully communicate with my clients and at times work with interpreters to ensure the best outcomes.

Working in rural setting definitely presents unique challenges when delivering a healthcare service that you cannot be prepared for. However, after my 7-week placement, I would unquestionably consider paid employment in a rural setting. I really appreciated the rapport that I developed with both my clients and colleagues and enjoyed meeting other health professionals with such diverse backgrounds.

While my experience of undertaking a rural placement was very rewarding and educational, there were additional expenses required for transport and accommodation which make rural placements harder to access for some students. I am grateful that I received a NAFEA scholarship to assist me in covering these expenses. This financial assistance allowed me to engage in such a unique learning experience, without placing any additional cost-related stress and anxiety. To anyone that is considering undertaking a placement in a rural setting, I couldn't recommend the experience enough. I have grown as a clinician in so many ways and I am extremely grateful to the team at NAFEA for the financial assistance to make this experience possible.

By Alicia Kruske