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SYNCHRONOUS REMOTE SUPERVISION OF CLINICAL AND PRACTICUM PLACEMENTS: CHALLENGES AND BENEFITS: A CASE OF "YES WE CAN BUT NO WE WON'T TO YES WE CAN AND WE WILL"

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This paper examines the challenges and benefits of synchronous remote supervision of clinical and practical placements for undergraduate students undertaking professional degrees that require a field or clinical placement. In Australia many professional degrees (nursing, medicine, teaching, speech pathology, clinical psychology etc) undertaken at universities require students to demonstrate that they meet graduate attributes and specified learning outcomes in accordance with the requirements of the external accrediting body. For many professional degrees universities tend to rely on adjunct or clinical supervisors to sign off that the student has achieved the requirements with little or no tangible evidence apart from signed reports. The Australian Federal Government and many other governments have expressed concern about the quality of graduates in professions particularly as it is universities and not hospitals, clinics or schools that are accrediting the graduates. This paper details the challenges confronting universities to overcome these difficulties and how through virtual synchronous supervision the quality of graduates can be observed and assessed with tangible evidence in a cost effective yet evidence based manner. Using synchronous links to various sites university supervisors have been able to observe and engage with the undergraduate students while they are on placement or practicum.

The paper discusses the institutional, cultural and technical hurdles and barriers of the project which has been continuing for more than four years. The solutions and outcomes are also discussed. To borrow from the current president of the United States who used as his clarion call in the January 2008 New Hampshire speech "Yes we can" so to can universities ensure engagement in the field with their students in a manner that is evidence based and does not require travel, on-site visits or mere observation. Yes we can change and improve the quality of graduates and it can be done reasonably effectively and efficiently however as this study highlights there has also been a culture of resistance or "Yes we can but no we won't". Amidst the numerous barriers that have been put in place by

organizations, administrators and university academics there has been demonstrable improvement in the quality of graduates as well as improvement in the engagement between organizations and universities particularly when the various professionals in the field recognize how synchronous remote supervision enhances their role as experienced professionals supervising those in training.

Issues of ethics, security, privacy and organizational change are discussed and examples are provided of how these have been resolved.

keywords: profesisonal experience, remote supervision, quality assurance, synchronous supervision.