

MAKING A DIFFERENCE IN RURAL HEALTH

INTRODUCING MONASH RURAL HEALTH

Monash medical students are embedded with Monash Rural Health across regional and rural Victoria, making a real difference to local communities. They are the faces of our practical commitment to improving rural health and developing a sustainable rural health workforce.

Since its inception, this multi-site school has been making a difference in rural health and developing a sustainable rural health workforce.

We're making that difference to rural and regional people and their communities, locally, nationally and internationally through our commitment to education, research and research training with a focus on regional and rural needs.

Our main focus has always been to provide the rural base for the delivery of the Monash medical course.

We also provide support to nursing and allied health students who are gaining experience in regional and rural areas.

We operate in two regions - the Loddon-Mallee in north-west Victoria and Gippsland in the south-east - with a footprint that extends across Victoria from Mildura to Orbost.

We're also looking beyond graduation by facilitating the establishment of postgraduate specialist training pathways outside Melbourne so medical graduates can pursue their entire career in regional and rural Victoria.

Finally, we lead and foster a program of rural health research aimed at improving the health of rural and Indigenous communities



OUR GRADUATES RETURN

No place like home

Home exerted a big pull on Travis Taggart and Jane Neyland. Originally from Robinvale, Jane spent her final year as a medical student in Mildura in 2007. Now she's a GP in nearby Buronga. Mildura-born Travis won the Mildura Base Hospital Clinical Employee of the Year 2015 award: an impressive achievement for an intern who graduated from Monash in 2014. He spent time in Bendigo during his training and is now happily settled back in Mildura working in the emergency department and intensive care unit for 2016.

Follow your heart

Others made personal connections while training in Mildura. Paige Thompson completed two years of her clinical training in Mildura and met a local guy while she was there. Back she came for her PGY1 and 2 years and is now practising as a GP in Mildura. Love blossomed when Eve Westland and Matt Facey spent a year in Mildura in 2006. The pair eventually married and now work in the Ballarat and Daylesford region as a GP and pathologist.

Kerry Jewell met her partner while they were both interns at Bendigo Health. She is now a medical registrar there, after spending time in Melbourne undertaking specialist training that's not available in Bendigo. They both plan to settle here when training is finished.



Travis Taggart

Love of life

Many students fall for the regional lifestyle. Erin Kelly spent her second clinical training year in Mildura and came back for a good deal of her postgraduate training. She now works at the Mildura Base Hospital as an obstetrics and gynaecology registrar. Mildura-born Stephanie Opt'hoog was part of Monash's Extended Rural Cohort stream. A great advocate for rural training, she's now doing her PGY1 at Bendigo Health.

Tom Brough is originally from Childers 400 km north of Brisbane. He came to Bendigo for a year in 2007, which turned into all three clinical training years and an internship. Now he's working as an emergency physician at Bendigo Health and helping train the next generation of medical students. Even as a student, Bendigo allowed him to indulge his love of veggie gardening and animals. He kept three chooks, two ducks, two dogs and a lamb.

For Cassandra Worme, it wasn't the regional lifestyle but family that kept her local. Like Travis and Jane, she studied in Bendigo where she was born. After graduating in 2010, she stayed in the region and now works as a GP in her home town.



Tom Brough



Cassandra Worme

Flying into a medical career

Flying operational missions with the RAAF is a long way from working as a medical intern at Sale Hospital. But Leigh Carpenter couldn't be happier. In 2015 Leigh completed his final year of medicine, most of it with Monash Rural Health. This year, he is an intern at Central Gippsland Health Service (CGHS) Sale campus.

After 25 years as an airforce pilot, the last 16 at East Sale RAAF Base, Leigh had what he described as a "midlife crisis". "I'd hit that critical point in my career when it was either climb up the command chain and sit behind a desk, get out and fly for a commercial airline or change careers."

Ironically, although he chose military flying, Leigh had wanted to become a doctor since high school. So sponsored by the military, Leigh enrolled in the Monash graduate entry medical course, completing his first year with Monash Rural Health in Churchill and the following years between Sale and Bairnsdale. It was the opportunity to study medicine in a rural or regional area that appealed to Leigh who didn't want to disrupt family life – he is married with two children, aged ten and six. "We really love living here and were reluctant to move," he said.

After completing his internship, he returns to the military for five years where he will specialise in aviation medicine. But eventually he hopes to become a GP, preferably in the local area. "I'd be over the moon ... I love general practice."



Leigh Carpenter

WORKING WITH COMMUNITY

New intern stays local

A former Trafalgar High School student started her professional life as a new doctor at Latrobe Regional Hospital in 2016. A series of placements as a student with Monash Rural Health convinced her of the benefits of working rurally.

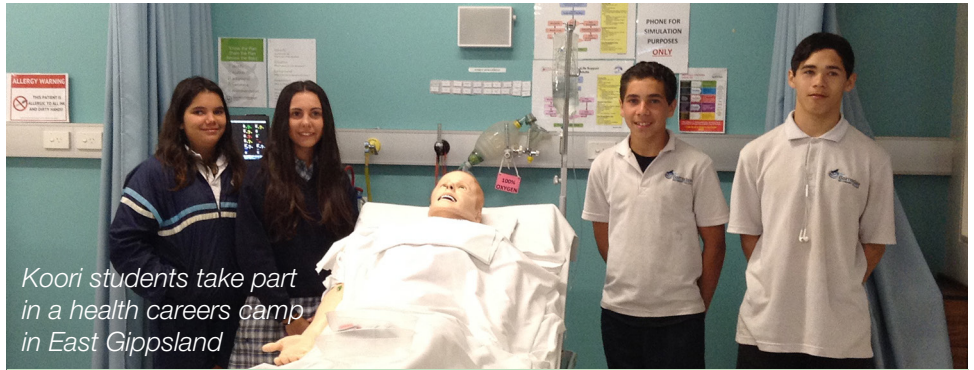
“I very much enjoyed my rotations through fourth and fifth year at Latrobe Regional Hospital,” Julia Buras said. “There were so many varied opportunities and diverse patient cases to see and there was support from junior and more senior staff. As a student, if you get involved, it is a very supportive environment.” Fellow students whom she mentored were saying: “I want to come back here [Traralgon], I don’t want to go to Melbourne now”. She says that is a real testament to the rural sites and the support they offer.”

Julia also encouraged any other students considering rural placements to seize the opportunity, saying “it can really provide you with a bigger picture of patient care and offers a better-rounded and holistic approach to what might be experienced elsewhere.”

International becomes local

As a medical student Debby Darmansjah is used to adapting to new environments. This year she will settle into the East Gippsland area as she commences her internship with Bairnsdale Regional Health Service (BRHS). The Indonesian-born medical graduate came to Australia at the age of 15. She spent several years boarding in Perth before moving to Melbourne to complete an undergraduate degree in biomedicine. Then she gained entry to the Monash graduate medical course with the first year at Monash Rural Health in Churchill. This four-year course included multiple placements in the Latrobe Valley and across Gippsland.

“Being in a rural environment really suited my personality,” Debby says now. “Being in these settings means there are a smaller amount of students and more opportunity for hands-on learning,” she said. “I had such a great time that I really wanted to return - everything felt familiar there and I was able to pick up where I left off.”



Koori students take part in a health careers camp in East Gippsland

Associate Professor David Campbell and Dr Jane Greacen at Monash Rural Health in East Gippsland have worked over many years to improve the health of the East Gippsland Aboriginal community by expanding the Aboriginal health professional workforce through the Centre of Excellence for Aboriginal Health in East Gippsland (CEAHEG).

David and Jane have contributed to research to understand the barriers faced by local Aboriginal families and students in completing school, attending university and pursuing health careers. The outcomes of this research were discussed at a major conference held in May 2014, attended by local Elders and other members of the East Gippsland Aboriginal community, health service representatives, local health practitioners, university academics, secondary school representatives and members of local, state and federal government.

David and Jane strive to improve the educational experience of Monash health students on clinical placements through the development of tutorials on local Aboriginal beliefs, traditions and health. The pair received the Vice Chancellor’s Social Inclusion awards in late 2014 when Jane paid tribute to the leaders of the East Gippsland Aboriginal community who initiated the project.

“Sadly two of the founding members of CEAHEG, Uncle Jumbo Pearce and Uncle Albert Mullett, have died in the past two years, and it is important that CEAHEG’s aims are achieved as a legacy of the many years of work supporting education for Koori youth undertaken by these Elders and other members of the CEAHEG committee,” Jane said. “The findings of the research project outline a way forward to achieve these aims. CEAHEG is planning ways in which the vision and contribution of Uncle Jumbo and Uncle Albert can be formally recognised.”



Debby Darmansjah



Julia Buras

RESEARCH



Monash Rural Health has a long-established research program designed to contribute to an evidence base for improving health and health services in regional and rural areas.

Our research agenda

Monash Rural Health's research agenda aims to inform government policy and programs that affect the health of people in rural and regional Australia. Our research priorities fall into four broad areas:

- quality rural health care and health systems
- sustainable rural health workforce development
- innovative rural health professions learning and teaching models and methods
- rural and regional population health

A quick snapshot of some of our research milestones gives a better picture.

- Our researchers have been instrumental in developing the federal government's Modified Monash Model which is used to determine where support is needed in recruiting health professionals in regional, rural and remote areas.
- Monash Rural Health is a major partner in the Hazelwood Health Study, a longitudinal study of people affected by the 2014 fire in the Morwell open cut mine.
- Our researchers have conducted important studies into what can be done to encourage allied health professionals to choose a career in rural practice.
- We conducted a four-year study funded by the Victorian Mental Illness Research Fund into support services for parents with a mental illness.
- Gippsland-based researchers are working on a three-year project to improve coordination of care for cancer survivors.

Who do we work with?

Research literacy ensures that health professionals have the critical skills that evidence-based practice demands. We work with everyone from undergraduate students to practising clinicians and health professionals to help them develop research skills.

To PhD students we give the guidance and support they need while they remain in their rural or regional workplaces and communities. Under our close supervision, medicine students undertaking an honours year are embedded in regional communities and health services while researching real world problems. And we mentor health professionals to develop and conduct research projects in their fields of expertise in their workplaces.

How does a research partnership work?

While health services know where the gaps are, a research project that successfully bridges them begins with a tightly phrased question. That's where we start work: formulating the research question with our partner. From there we can help apply for a grant, design the study and analyse the data. Finally, when the results are ready to publish, we help our partners write the paper and target appropriate journals.

Further information

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