



Bendigo Regional Clinical School Newsletter

October 2010

From the Director

The traditional preoccupation in these newsletters has been with the various aspects of our medical education programs as they have unfolded over the past two or more years. No doubt, we will return to this theme repeatedly in the future. But this newsletter reminds us that Schools of Rural Health in Australia have a broader agenda than medical education alone.

In this edition we report on the Mindshop Excellence program in which we hosted groups of year 10 students for one week to address real workplace issues. They were asked to analyse the challenges in recruiting rural students into medical school programs and attracting doctors to work in general practice in Bendigo. The students' insights pertain to the critical conduits that must be developed between high school and tertiary education as part of any strategy to develop a rural health workforce. The emergency services contributed to inspirational learning opportunities for young medical students and a new appointment in Indigenous health at the School will develop and promote learning opportunities for students from all health disciplines in partnership with Indigenous communities.

A thoughtful orchestration of multi-sectoral inputs will be needed to improve the health of all rural communities and it is pleasing to see the School extending its mandate in new and practical ways with this end in mind.

Professor Geoff Solarsh

Open for business

Bendigo Regional Clinical School's capacity to train more medical students increased substantially with the opening of our new building in Mercy Street. While we moved in mid-June, the building was officially opened by the Hon. Jacinta Allan, Victorian Minister for Regional and Rural Development on 27 August.

Director of the Bendigo Regional Clinical School, Professor Geoff Solarsh said a taste of practice outside the major metropolitan areas played an important part in a medical student's decision to choose rural practice as a career. "These new facilities are part of a long-term plan to increase the rural health workforce by giving students first-hand experience of the rewards of practice and life outside the big cities," said Professor Solarsh.

Jointly funded by Federal and State Governments, the \$7.6 million development provides new tutorial rooms, upgraded clinical teaching facilities, and student lounge and study areas. (Continued on back page)



Welcome to country

Before the official opening ceremony, Mark Pietzsch accompanied by Uncle Brien Nelson performed a smoking ceremony. Smoking leaves were carried throughout the new building. The small fire was then placed near the front door so that guests passed through the smoke as they arrived. Uncle Brien later welcomed the guests to Jaara Jaara country.



Prof. Geoff Solarsh and Minister Allan unveil the plaque and declare the new building open

Meet our staff

Natasha Franklin

Indigenous Health Lecturer

In all the ten years she spent in central Australia, Natasha Franklin never actually saw a snake when out walking her two dogs, despite one of them surviving a snake bite. The Sunday after the September deluge, she found one sunning itself on a rock in the Spring Gully reserve. "It must have been washed out of its hole with all the rain," she says. Welcome to Bendigo.

Although she is based in Bendigo, Natasha is part of the Rural and Indigenous Health Unit in Moe. Her teaching role will take her to medical, nursing and allied health students throughout north-west and south-east Victoria. But her community role is focused on Bendigo and the region where she will be building working partnerships with key stakeholders. "The role is not pre-defined," says Natasha. "I'll be shaping and moulding it over the next few months."

Natasha originally trained as a nurse in New Zealand before moving to Alice Springs to take part in a graduate nursing program. She has worked in critical care, cardiac rehabilitation and primary health care, which took her to remote health services from Tennant Creek all the way to the South Australian border. Teaching has long played a part in her career. She worked at the Alice Springs campus of Charles Darwin University teaching undergraduate nurses, and the Batchelor Institute of Indigenous Tertiary Education teaching Aboriginal Health Workers and undergraduate nurses.



Natasha and friends. Her role involves teaching, research and community partnerships.

Coming to Bendigo from Alice Springs has been something of a shock, in terms of climate. Having moved in the middle of June her Alice Springs wardrobe hasn't quite met the needs of the Bendigo climate. In Alice Springs there is a high turnover of people. Some nurses, for example, come for placements as short as two weeks she explains.

So once long-term residents established their own social and support networks, they tended not to move outside them. "The Bendigo community is very friendly. It's not just the people at work, even in the local supermarket people will talk to you. It's been quite surprising."

Taking advantage of that, Natasha (and her two Alaskan Malamutes) are planning to join a sled dog organisation, the Bendigo Brumbies natural horsemanship group, and a tennis club. "I've always played social tennis, but I thought I'd take some proper lessons." She pauses. "I'm having a few more lessons now!"

Educating health professionals at both undergraduate and postgraduate levels about Aboriginal health remains her professional focus.

"It's a really important part of closing the gap between Aboriginal and non-Aboriginal health and wellbeing," she says.

Year 10 students solve Monash business problems

Take two groups of Year 10 students, put them in cramped meeting rooms with a real business problem and a week to come up with a solution. A crazy idea? Bendigo Regional Clinical School and the Primary Care Clinic were actually amazed at what the students produced.

This year we were both involved in the Mind Shop Excellence program which places five or six students with host companies to work as consultants on real business issues. Eight schools from Bendigo, Castlemaine and Maryborough took part with all the host organisations involved in some way in the health sector.

Bendigo RCS asked the students how we could best engage with rural students to interest them in studying medicine. The Primary Care Clinic asked them to look at how they can recruit enough medical and allied health staff for the new Bendigo Primary Health Centre (GP super clinic).

The student consultants interviewed staff, contractors, medical students, and ploughed through mountains of reference material and web sites. On Friday afternoon they presented their findings. Between them they'd designed logos and web sites, and come up with whole strategies to recruit staff into the clinic and students to study medicine.

The Primary Care Clinic report has already been shared with the communications committee of the Bendigo Primary Health Centre. The Bendigo RCS report will form the basis of a review of our recruiting activities. It's also prompted some cross-institutional conversations which we hope will lead to further collaborative recruitment activities.

If you ever needed an injection of enthusiasm and fresh blood, you can't look past a group of 16-year-old consultants!

Universities train students together

Good working relationships between health professionals and universities have been fostered through joint training sessions between Year 2 Monash University medical students and senior La Trobe University Bendigo physiotherapy students.

Monash medical students in their second year spend two weeks in a rural or regional area to develop an awareness of the challenges and rewards of practising outside a metropolitan area. Monash lecturer, Terri Galea, had contacts at La Trobe and organised the sessions in May and September.

'Developing an awareness among students of how each profession works builds a great foundation for collaborative patient care.'

'It's also a fantastic way to increase collaborative education of health professionals between the two universities,' said Terri.

The physiotherapy students facilitated a session at La Trobe's physiotherapy lab at the Anne Caudle Centre around the return to work and long-term management of a farm injury. The two-part scenario looks first at a GP's response to an injury, then explores the role of physiotherapists and occupational therapists in rehabilitation.

'We've been delighted with the enthusiastic response of the School of Physiotherapy and its students to our approach and we're sure this will be just the beginning of a rewarding collaboration,' said Terri.



Test drive: medical students learn first hand from La Trobe physio students.

Emergency medicine up close

First year Monash medical students learned firsthand what it takes to save lives involved in a major traffic accident when they took part in a joint exercise with Bendigo emergency services. The students, police, CFA, SES and ambulance all attended a crash involving two cars at the CFA training ground in Huntly.

Organiser, Terri Galea, said the exercise exposed students to the team work required to save lives before patients even arrived at a hospital emergency department. "Good patient outcomes depend on health professionals being able to work well as a team. In emergency medicine, that team work starts at the accident scene and students need to understand what goes on before patients present at a hospital," she said.

The scenario took students through accident scene management, and the rescue and stabilisation of injured people. One of the students got a very close view of the action when she volunteered to be the crash victim who was cut out of the car.

All Monash medical students spend a week in their first year in rural or regional areas to learn about the practice of medicine and community life outside a major metropolitan city. The emergency exercise was the culmination of a day spent visiting police, SES and CFA sites to learn how those services work. The emergency services personnel enjoyed the exercise as much as the students and are looking forward to repeating it next year.



Students and emergency services were first briefed by the incident controller.

Clinical skills training area doubles

With the new building providing alternate student lounge and office accommodation, the clinical skills training area has been able to expand.

The old student common room has become a clinical skills tutorial room and the original clinical skills lab is being set up as a two-bed ward to simulate a hospital environment. The expansion has also given the clinical educators their own office space. In the past they have had to work in the lab itself and vacate it whenever it was being used for training sessions.

Monash students, Bendigo Health staff and ambulance personnel all use the clinical skills lab for training. Monash University and Bendigo Health each own part task trainers (simulated body parts) and other equipment which is shared. The expansion means more skills training sessions can be conducted.



The SES and CFA cut a student volunteer out of a car as part of the scenario.

Inaugural wellbeing for doctors workshop

Doctors spend their working lives looking after the health of their patients. It has been shown that healthy doctors provide better medicine for their patients. The inaugural Doctors' Wellbeing Workshop will provide time, space and tools to help establish a healthy work/life balance.

A collaborative venture of the Central Victoria GP Network and the Bendigo Regional Clinical School, the day will offer workshops, panel discussions and presentations from medical practitioners sharing their stories. Topics include:

- Doctors' health – the theory and the practice. Latest research on health accessing behaviour and symptom recognition of doctors.
- Practical strategies for balance, relaxation, meditation and stress management.
- How Narrative Practice can make for a better and healthier physician.
- Beyond the medical record – creative writing workshop for doctors

Langley Estate provides a tranquil garden setting for the workshop and accommodation is also available there for those staying in Bendigo for the weekend.

When: Saturday 23 October,
10.00 am to 5.00 pm concluding with drinks, canapés and poetry reading. Optional dinner 7.00 pm.

Where: Langley Estate, Napier St Bendigo
Cost: \$270 with catering
(RWAV rebate available for GPs)

Contact Pam Harvey for more details on 5440 9083 or pam.harvey@monash.edu.

Contact us

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Student intake interviews multiply

Interviews have always been an important part of the selection process into the medical degree. This year the format is changing and all interviewers need to be trained in the new process.

Multiple Mini Interviews (MMIs) consist of eight sequential stations. Applicants are interviewed by one interviewer at each station for eight minutes. This is followed by two minutes for scoring and changeover. The full circuit will take each applicant 90 minutes. The MMI process allows eight people to assess the applicants individually, rather than three people working to reach a consensus as the old process did.

People who have acted as interviewers in the past will have received advice from our Admissions Office about the training sessions. In Bendigo training sessions will take place on Thursday 30 September. (Session 1: 3.30 – 5.30 pm, Session 2: 6.00 – 8.00 pm) Interviews will take place in Bendigo on Friday 3 December.

We are always looking for interviewers. If you would like to help with interviewer applicants for the next intake of students into the medical degree, please contact Cathy Wheel for details on 5440 9061 or by email at cathy.wheel@monash.edu

Health professionals take teaching to next level

A new group of students started the Grad Cert in Health Professional Education at the beginning of this year. The 18 students (an increase in numbers from 12 in the first intake) come from as far afield as Horsham, Echuca and Ararat. They include nurses, GPs, specialists and a speech pathologist.

Lecturer, Pam Harvey, says students learn as much from each other as the formal part of the course. "Many have a breadth of experience from their professional practice that translates so well into teaching. And each profession brings quite different skills to the course."

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For the first time students and clinical school staff are on the one site. The expanded clinical school will be able to cater for around 85 students at any one time, up from 54 when the funding for the development was first announced. The school will now see over 140 students over the course of the year.

Situated in the developing Bendigo health education and research precinct, the new facilities are designed to draw students, practitioners, clinical teaching staff and other institutions into much closer collaboration.

"The Bendigo Regional Clinical School will eventually form one component of a unique health training precinct that will also include the Bendigo Primary Health Centre (GP super clinic) and the La Trobe University Rural Health School, co-located with the Bendigo hospital" said Professor Solarsh.

"Medical, nursing and allied health students will learn in a truly interprofessional environment and Bendigo continues to build its health sciences academic base."



Students attend four day-long face-to-face sessions each semester with additional reading and assignments undertaken in the intervening weeks.

The next intake will be in 2012.

Contact Natalie Radomski for more information on 5440 9015 or by email at natalie.radomski@monash.edu, or see the web site: www.med.monash.edu.au/srh/medical-education/clinical-educators.html