



Bendigo Regional Clinical School

SCHOOL OF RURAL HEALTH

NEWSLETTER OF THE BENDIGO REGIONAL CLINICAL SCHOOL – ISSUE 9: APRIL 2008

From the Director

**Professor Geoff Solarsh, Director
Bendigo Regional Clinical School**

Bendigo Regional Clinical School is a great place to walk into these days.

My colleagues at the School will contend that this has always been the case and of course they are correct, but I feel that there is a new sense of common purpose and harmony that is palpable in the many conversations I have with our staff as I move about the School.

Everyone is more confident about the overall direction of the School and about the roles they need to play in their particular areas, whether it is capital works, student recruitment and support, professional development, practice recruitment or day-to-day teaching and research.

This was particularly evident during the recent visit to the School by our Dean, Professor Steve Wesselingh.

I was enormously proud of all our team leaders in our completely unrehearsed presentation of the various portfolios of activity.

It hung together beautifully and it was clear to me that the ship has been launched, that there is a collective understanding of our shared direction and that everyone is working together and pulling their weight.

We have emerged from a number of big events challenged, as always, by the competing claims on our time but grateful for the opportunity to do exciting work and to be part of this great Australian adventure in rural health.

It was great to host the FRAME meeting here, a gathering of the Heads of Rural Clinical Schools in Australia, and based on everything I have heard the all the effort put in by our staff was warmly acknowledged.

A big team followed on to the OZZAWA conference, some to present and all of us to learn from each other's experience.

The dust will now hopefully settle and give us time to focus on the many and complex preparations needed for the first ERC cohort in 2009.

Your efforts are greatly appreciated. ☺

Award-winning student recognised

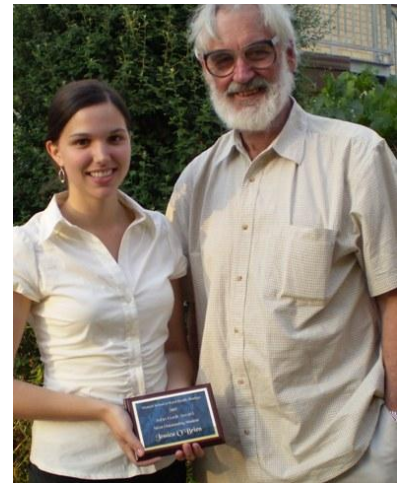
The most outstanding Year 3 student of 2007 was presented with the John Gault Award in early February.

Jessica O'Brien, originally from Warrimoo in the Blue Mountains in NSW, spent last year in Bendigo. Now on a placement at the Alfred Hospital, she came back to meet this year's Year 3 cohort for dinner and receive her award.

Dr John Gault, for whom the award is named, has a long association with Bendigo and Lister House where he used to teach nursing students. He joked that it is not a 'memorial' award because he is still around to present it.

First presented in 2004, the award is sponsored by Dr Damien Cleeve of Bendigo Radiology and recognises the most outstanding academic achievement of a Year 3 student.

Jessica received a cheque and plaque and her name will join previous recipients on the honour board in the foyer at Mercy Street. She remembered her year here fondly and said she already missed Bendigo. ☺



Outstanding: Dr John Gault presented Jessica O'Brien with an award in recognition of her outstanding academic achievements last year.

New committee takes on local student association

"These dedicated students will be working hard this year to ensure your placement at Bendigo Regional Clinical School is one of the most memorable, enjoyable, and productive experiences of your student years." Outgoing Bendigo Medical Student Association president, Kerry Lee, summed up the association's aims neatly when she introduced the 2008 committee.

Kerry was instrumental in establishing the association last year. While Bendigo is not that far from Clayton, it is still far enough for students to loose touch with the main student body. The Bendigo Medical Student Association aims to fill that gap.

Last year the committee organised BBQs and social events, a gala end-of-year ball and a bed push to raise money for Bendigo Health. The association also publishes a newsletter giving students vital information about where to go for groceries, decent coffee and a good night out, as well as good student gossip.

New president, Elizabeth Coman hails from Rutherglen. She and fellow committee members are all based at the Bendigo Hospital for the year, and are busy working on the schedule of events for this year. They'll also attend meetings of the Community Advisory Committee, providing a direct link between them and the student body.

Year 3 brings big changes in a medical student's life. The first two years are spent in Clayton as an on-campus student. In Year 3, clinical training starts and students are placed in a hospital environment for the full year.

Suddenly students find themselves in a workplace environment and are expected to dress and behave in a professional manner. It can come as a jolt. The Bendigo Medical Student Association is there to provide mutual support for students in Year 3 and draw on the experience of Year 4 students. ☺

Australian rural medical educators meet in Bendigo

The Bendigo Regional Clinical School hosted 30 heads of rural clinical schools, operations managers and teaching staff at a forum in March.

The Innovations in Rural Medical Education forum provided an opportunity to exchange ideas about training doctors in rural and regional Australia.

It was a prelude to Ozzawa, the thirteenth Ottawa International Conference on Clinical Competence, which began in Melbourne the following day.

Cross-country collaboration

Professor Geoff Solarsh said the gathering was an important vehicle for information sharing between rural medical educators across the country.

"The wide geographic distribution of Rural Clinical Schools makes collaboration a challenge," Professor Solarsh said.

"All schools are working in environments with slightly different educational and health service arrangements, so we have much to learn from each other and these collaborations are therefore all the more important.

"This forum brings together the learnings of Rural Clinical Schools across Australia so we can all continue to develop the best training for medical students in rural areas."

Rural Clinical Schools

Speakers from Flinders University, James Cook University, Monash University and the Universities of Auckland, Melbourne, New South Wales, Queensland and Tasmania presented papers on innovations in teaching practices, resources and models of running Rural Clinical Schools.

Nine Australian universities have established Rural Clinical Schools and train medical students in over 60 rural and regional locations around the country.

Monash University has Rural Clinical Schools in Bendigo, East Gippsland, Gippsland and Mildura.

"With an increasing focus on the rural medical workforce, forums such as this are vital in creating strong networks to train future rural practitioners," said Professor Solarsh. ☞

Meet our staff

**Cheryl Sutherland
Year 3 Academic Coordinator
Bendigo Regional Clinical School**

Cheryl accidentally sent an email admonishing students about excessive Internet downloads to an earlier cohort of students. It's a mark of the affection they have for her that one student replied: "I know I was bad when I was there, but it wasn't me this time."

After 12 years as Accommodation Finance Manager at La Trobe University, Cheryl started with Monash University in 2004. This was the year the first cohort of Year 3 students in the new five-year degree course came to Bendigo for their clinical year. Until then, the Regional Clinical School and hospital had only hosted Year 5 and Year 6 students on rotation.

"We did everything," Cheryl remembers. "We shifted furniture, set up evacuation plans, recruited tutors and negotiated hospital timetables and teaching sessions." Then the students arrived and that is the best part of the job.

"I really love working with the students. You build a relationship with them every year and make sure they enjoy their time here." Cheryl has worked with every year level in her four years here, so she has a good understanding of the whole degree.

For many students Year 3 is the first time they have been away from home, and Cheryl has often provided a shoulder to cry on and met their family and friends at 21st birthday celebrations.

They're the sort of contacts she values and she's still in touch with the mother of a past student who is now a second year intern.

Keeping up with current students sees her regularly trotting between Lister House and Mercy Street. "You pick up on things that way. I go down to see both students and tutors after tutes. I'm really looking forward to moving into the new building because then we'll be in the same place all the time."

When she's not at work, Cheryl and her husband, Rob, enjoy live folk and jazz music. They've often volunteered at the National Folk Festival in Canberra. Lately they've just sat back and enjoyed the music.

Does she play as well? "No, we're what every musician needs—a professional audience!"

She's been in the audience at many a graduation too. "It's lovely to see how they've matured and grown. The clinical year is a really big year for them. Their maturity and clinical knowledge really expands."

As proud as any mother, she has a collection of graduation photos that she'll happily show off.

"It would be a shame if we lose that sense of family as the Bendigo Regional Clinical School gets bigger," she says. ☞



I love working with the students: Cheryl Sutherland (second from right at the back) with the 2007 cohort of Year 3 students.

Training the teachers


Health professionals in the north west of Victoria looking to improve their teaching skills started work on the Monash University Graduate Certificate in Health Professional Education in February.

This is the first time the program has been taught locally and it has been customised for the north west region, which takes in Bendigo and Mildura. The North West Program is being offered through a partnership between Monash University's Centre for Medical and Health Sciences Education and the School of Rural Health, North West Rural Medical Education Unit.

Thirteen participants are enrolled from a variety of professional backgrounds and specialities including nursing, medicine, oncology, paediatrics, mental health and general practice. They include clinical educators from the Monash University and University of Melbourne clinical education programs as well as educators teaching in other clinical settings and organisations in northern Victoria.

The course is designed to give health professionals involved in clinical teaching and supervision a sound theoretical basis for designing and applying learning and assessment strategies.

The two-year part-time North West program is offered in flexible learning mode and involves a combination of study days held in Bendigo/Mildura as well as distance learning activities.

This is an exciting initiative for the Northern Victoria that creates opportunities for clinical educators to share ideas and build new health professional education networks across the region. For enquiries about the North West Graduate Certificate in Health Education contact Natalie Radomski by phone: 5440 9015 or email: natalie.radomski@med.monash.edu.au 



Metaphorically speaking: students make use of a range of teaching resources including choosing a picture that represents their teaching style and speaking to it.

UK GP trainers learn about Victoria

Two GP trainers from the UK visited Bendigo during February as part of a fact-finding tour.


Dr Elizabeth (Bitty) Muller and Dr Jonathan (Shake) Seigel are both passionate about general practice and the teaching opportunities in rural Victoria. Although they are now based in the UK, both were born in South Africa and began their medical careers in a rural hospital in Zululand. It was here they met Prof. Geoff Solarsh who invited them to visit this year.

A full itinerary took them from Woodend to Swan Hill meeting the GPs who will play a part training Year 4 Extended Rural Cohort students. The two are hoping to return in 2009 to practise as GPs and to work with Monash University.

General practitioners in both countries have an independent streak and more control over their working lives than hospital consultants they both say. 'That's what we sell—self-empowerment and a great work/life balance.



'We want to open the door for students and say: Look at this!' says Shake. 'Here in Victoria there's a tremendous feeling of possibility, of "let's do it".'

'It's warmer!' Shake says of their overriding impression of Victoria. 'The people are very warm too—it's been lovely meeting all these people.' 

Independent streak: Drs Muller and Seigel are passionately promoting general practice as a career.

A real need for simulated patients

Every year when exams roll around, a group of voluntary community members get 'sick' and the Bendigo Regional Clinical School is looking for more people to join them.

They're the people who play the part of patients during a practical exam so students can demonstrate their competence in assessing a variety of conditions.

While students do work with real patients, simulated (or sim) patients make a vital contribution to medical training because using a real patient for an exam is unfair to both student and patient.

What does a sim patient look like?

Ideally, sim patient volunteers represent the same ethnic, age and body-type diversity as the general community. They attend training before being called on for an exam.

Before the exam, each volunteer receives a briefing about the condition they will role play. It covers the patient's history, family history if relevant and a list of symptoms.

It is not a scripted situation though. Each simulated consultation is directed by the student. Students often ask different questions to arrive at the same conclusion, so volunteers need to be confident enough to remain in the role.


Challenging parts

Complicated cases are particularly challenging for medical students at exam time. Psychiatric illness, for example, is given twice the length of time in the exam as a standard simulated consultation, which can be quite draining by the end of the session.

Portraying a mental illness is itself quite challenging. Volunteers need to be able to 'get inside' the condition and portray it sensitively and realistically. So the School is looking for people with acting experience to help out with these cases.

Volunteer to be a sim patient

If you would like to take part in the Sim Patient Program contact Pam Harvey for more information by phone: 5440 9083 – or by email: pam.harvey@med.monash.edu.au.

All volunteers' details are kept in strict confidence. 

Linking students into the community

Becoming part of the Bendigo community is an important part of the student experience. Earlier this year, the Community Advisory Committee surveyed students who had just arrived in Bendigo to find out what social and work opportunities they are looking for.

Many students are interested in tutoring secondary students. One Year 3 student was immediately linked up with a secondary student wanting help with chemistry. One Committee member was able to link two students with the Bendigo Discovery Centre, while others are looking for part-time work in the hospitality industry or administration.

All work and no play makes for a dull year in Bendigo, so the School encourages students to forge social links as well. This year brings a French horn player to Bendigo who'd like to play in chamber groups, bands or an orchestra. There are also some keen netballers looking for a competition, and runners and cyclists.



If you are able to offer part-time work to students or would like to take a student under your club's wing, contact Graham Allardice by phone: 5440 9000 or email: graham.allardice@med.monash.edu.au. ☎

Building project goes to tender mid-year

The form of the new Mercy Street building is emerging from the architects' offices.

Early in January, the architects presented preliminary plans to staff for comment. Geotechnical and engineering reports are being prepared, planning permit approval was sought from the council in March and the project will go to construction tender mid-year. It's hoped staff and students can move into the new building during the second semester of 2009.

The major axis of the new building is a pedestrian walkway which will link the hospital and Anne Caudle campuses. It will literally bring people through the heart of the new building and tie it into the whole precinct as well. The proposed coffee shop will certainly play a part!

The project is much more than new accommodation for the Bendigo Regional Clinical School. It's designed to draw practitioners, students and clinical teachers and other institutions into much closer collaboration.

It's also environmentally sustainable incorporating features such as two thermal chimneys and baffles to keep hot sun away from north-facing windows. Sensitivity to the immediate environment is also important. The multi-level car park of early concept drawings has gone underground resulting in a low-rise structure. It's a sophisticated building and looks to Bendigo's rural heritage for inspiration with allusions to rust and weathered timber. ☎



NORTH EASTERN / CARPARK ELEVATION



MERCY STREET ELEVATION

Collaboration: the new Rural Clinical School building is designed to tie the medical precinct together and encourage closer links between practitioners, students and teachers.

Did you know?

Bendigo hosts around 150 students each year across all five levels of the Bachelor of Medicine and Surgery, and manages the placement of 290 Year 1 and 2 students across northern Victoria. This year:

- 22 Year 1 and 32 Year 2 students will spend one and two weeks respectively in and around Bendigo
- in Year 3, 20 students spend the year based at Bendigo hospital
- in Year 4, groups of 22 students study general practice, women's health, children's health and psychiatry in nine-week rotations
- in Year 5, seven groups of between 10 and 12 students visit on six-week rotations
- Bendigo also hosts four groups of eight students from the University of Melbourne. ☎

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