



In This Edition

Monash students start new Year 4 program 1

Year 3 orientation launches straight into clinical skills 2

New medical centre offers broad learning experience 3

Practice Profile - Lister House Medical Centre 3

Editorial: Geoff Solarsh 4

Better access to patients 4

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Monash students start new Year 4 program



New program: Year 4 Monash students took part in a five-day orientation in February before embarking on their studies.

Where do you put 38 Monash University Year 4 students for a week of orientation in Bendigo? At La Trobe University of course. The new north-west Year 4 program brings all students together for a week at the beginning of each semester. They then disperse to the clinical schools in Mildura, Bendigo, or one of three rural hubs from Swan Hill down to Woodend for the rest of the semester.

However, with building works still underway at Mercy Street, and the Year 3 orientation program happening simultaneously, space was somewhat limited, so Year 4 Manager, Lyndsey Brown, approached La Trobe University. In a sign of the level of cooperation that is now being developed between the two universities, the Director of the Faculty of Health Sciences agreed to let Monash host the orientation week in their building. Fortunately we were also able to utilise the La Trobe University student accommodation for the hub students, which gave the students no excuses to be late for any sessions!

In the past, students have had a good idea of what to expect from the Year 4 experience from those who have gone before them. However, given the fourth year of the NVRMEN program is new to Bendigo and Mildura in 2010, students were given a thorough introduction to each of the disciplines and got the opportunity to meet staff from the Bendigo and Mildura Regional Clinical Schools, hub coordinators and tutors that they would meet in clinical practice. Of particular interest to the students were the hands on clinical sessions and a lecture from a singing paediatrician (no it wasn't one of ours).

As importantly, they got to meet each other. Students are part of the whole MBBS cohort during their first two years and split between Mildura and Bendigo in Year 3, together with a number of students from the metropolitan cohort, so for some students this was the first time they had met each other. A pizza and games night on the Tuesday evening helped break the ice.

Monash students start new year 4 program

continued from page 1

At the end of a very full week, students packed up and moved onto their new accommodation in which they will spend the first semester. Second semester will start in July with another three-day review program in Bendigo.

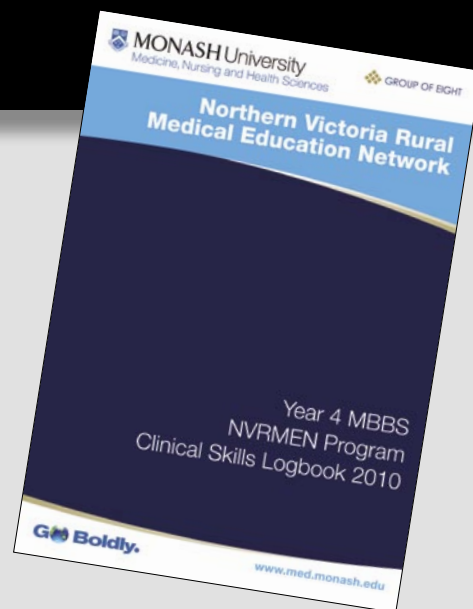
Mapping tools

New tools were developed as part of the Year 4 program redesign last year.

The Clinical Skills Logbook provides a record of students' clinical experiences and learning

achievements across the year. Completing the logbook is a requirement of the Year 4 course, but it also provides an illustration of progress for discussion with mentors.

The child health framework maps common and important health conditions in childhood against some of the most common presenting symptoms. During the year students are encouraged to plot the conditions and presenting complaints that they encounter. The aim is to document how well they are covering the curriculum.



It will also help them develop an approach to the differential diagnosis of important clinical conditions in childhood.

Year 3 orientation launches straight into clinical skills

The Bendigo Regional Clinical School launched the Yr 3 medical students into their clinical training from day one of their orientation.

In the past, students have undertaken skills orientation gradually over the commencement of their hospital clinical year. This year their orientation featured working through one of the basic systems each day: cardiovascular, respiratory, gastrointestinal and neurological. This new structure is very important as it then forms the foundation of physical examination skill development for the remaining years of the student's medical training.



Observe: the mornings started with a formal presentation about one system.

The mornings was divided between a formal presentation on assessing the system by A/Prof Chris Holmes (working with a volunteer simulated patient), onto student practice at physical examination, finishing up with the students spending the afternoon on the wards at the hospital, where they were able to practice their skills by examining real patients, under the supervision of our BRCS tutors.

with the orientation week. They acted as mentors, smoothing the transition for the Monash students into their first clinical year.

The new approach was a great success with excellent feedback being received from the students on the new approach that allowed them involvement with patients right from the start.

Students also attended sessions about learning styles and communication skills, which are an important aspect of clinical skills.

The University of Melbourne Semester 8 ERC students, who have been in Bendigo since July last year, assisted



Communicate: developing communication skills was an important part of orientation.



Practice: the morning's formal presentation was followed by practice physical examination.

Practice Profile

LISTER HOUSE MEDICAL CENTRE, SHEPPARTON



When University of Melbourne ERC students begin their community-based year in July, Lister House Medical Centre will be one of their hosts.

Established in the 1930s, the practice now has 14 GPs and four practice nurses, as well as offering pathology, diabetes education, audiology and psychology services. Our GPs have a wide range of special interests including internal medicine, obstetrics, women's health, paediatrics, aged care, mental health, sports medicine, and minor surgery. The practice currently operates from two sites on opposite sides of Nixon St, although we will soon develop one of the sites to allow us to relocate the whole practice into the one building and provide a consulting room for medical students.

We have a long record as a quality teaching practice with involvement in undergraduate teaching for many years, and in vocational training since the 1970s. Two GP registrars are

currently training with us as part of Bogong Regional General Practice training network.

Like so many of the larger general practices, we have a huge cohort of patients covering just about every aspect and age group of community medicine. One of our GPs practises obstetrics, with about 80 deliveries a year. Shepparton has a large number of quality aged care facilities. Our practice itself has a large cohort of patients, many of whom have been patients for years. I have a 78-year-old lady who has been attending the practice since birth and tells me she has only seen two GPs! Until recently she was living on the farm at which she was born.

All this offers excellent resources for hands-on experience and teaching. ERC students will see their own patients and be encouraged to follow them up, including to investigation and specialist appointments. They will also take part in the registrar teaching program, and the registrars will contribute to our undergraduate teaching program.

Students will need to spend time at Goulburn Valley Health to gain adequate exposure to the in-patient setting, but since most patients are out in the community, most patient contacts in all disciplines will be in the practice setting

The ERC gives us an exciting opportunity to give students interested in general practice a strong 'feel' for it as the specialty it rightly is. Students who wish to pursue a career in General Practice can now plan their training in a continuum. The ERC is the first step, leading to country hospital internship and regional GP training, with the real opportunity for GP terms at the same practice as the ERC placement.

Graeme Jones,
FRACGP
Practice Principal



New medical centre offers broad learning experience

The University of Melbourne Shepparton Medical Centre, located at the academic centre for Rural Health Campus in Shepparton, opened in January 2010. This clinic provides an outstanding environment to combine both clinical care and teaching, for undergraduate and postgraduate students. The clinic is managed within the University structure with a clear intent of providing clinical teaching, as well as clinical service. The clinic staff have been, and will continue to be, recruited with that intent.

The clinic provides general practitioner services. And the aim is to also provide some specialist (general physician, general surgeon, psychiatry, paediatrician etc) and allied health services, to add to the breadth of the learning experience, while providing clinical support and opportunities for collaboration between practitioners.

The building provides capacity for 10 practitioner consulting rooms with 10 learning consulting rooms adjoining to allow learners to work beside practitioners, thus encouraging immediate and active learning. The students 'learn by doing', seeing patients independently prior to the involvement of the supervising practitioner. The clinic also contains procedure rooms, and a student teaching hub which has been designed to encourage multiple interactions between students and

different practitioners, thus providing breadth and depth to the student learning experience and a true learning environment for all.

Recruitment of sufficient staff, dedicated to teaching as well as clinical service, is key to the clinic's success. A good start has been made, but it will take time to recruit sufficient suitable staff to reach full capacity. Another key to success is the willingness of patients to participate in student education. Over the past eight years patients attending Goulburn Valley Health and other health service providers in the Goulburn Valley community have clearly demonstrated their willingness to contribute to student teaching we look forward to this continuing at Shepparton Medical Centre where teaching and patient care go hand in hand.



Hand in hand: teaching and patient care are combined in the new Shepparton Medical Centre.

Breaking new ground

After a couple of years of intense preparation, the Monash NVRMEN Year 4 program in General Practice, Children's Health, Women's Health and Psychiatry kicked off in 2010 at multiple sites across the Loddon Mallee Region. In this program students spend one semester in a 'regional' hub - Bendigo or Mildura - and one semester at an academic general practices in a 'rural' hub in Woodend, Gisborne, Castlemaine, Maryborough, Swan Hill or Kerang. Students cover all four of these disciplines concurrently in placements that include regional hospitals, smaller community hospitals, specialist consulting rooms, maternal and child health services, psychiatric services, community health services and extended semester-long placements in general practice.

This is the first year of the program so students have had to break a lot of new ground. They have had to adapt to learning four disciplines and therefore four new 'languages' together. They have needed to settle in, as team members, to large general practices and to take on new responsibilities for semi-autonomous patient consulting, albeit under careful supervision. They have needed to monitor their own progress in meeting the learning objectives of these disciplines and the extensive requirements for documenting their clinical experience set by the University.

Our committed team of clinical supervisors and administrative staff across these multiple sites has gone way beyond the call of duty to support our students as they navigate their way through this new approach to learning and to reassure them, on the odd occasion, when students have struggled with some of these new demands. But the bouquet of the first semester must go to the students themselves who have dug in, helped us to establish the program in multiple new sites and given us the feedback we need to maximise their learning experience. With our first program review scheduled for August, the next phase of further development is about to begin.

Professor Geoff Solarsh
 Director
 Bendigo Regional
 Clinical School
 Monash University



Better access to patients



Supportive: the relationships you build with other students, make clinical training in the country a rewarding experience.

Evan and Matt are currently based in Shepparton and looking forward to their community placement in Benalla.

Now we're one year into our clinicals and getting comfortable with clinical learning. The major change from preclinicals is that we learn more the more heavily involved we are with patient management. The challenge is to not only observe from the back of rounds but to present our patient assessments and clinical plans to consultants as often as we can. At Shepparton hospital we do this commonly.

Are we going to see enough of the right patients in Benalla? We fully expect that we'll have better access to the patients that we need to see than almost any other Melbourne Uni student. In Benalla hospital there is roughly one birth every second day and given we're the only two students at the hospital we'll not have any trouble.

Are we going to be exposed to the right specialists? The University is working to create a program where we will be exposed to as much as possible but as we are the initial ERC group it is important that we work with the University to maximise our own learning experience.

The other great thing about doing clinical school in the country is the relationships that you build with the other students you work with. Living in the Pods and Shepp has been an amazing experience. Not only are the students you work with just colleagues, they are your roommates and good friends as well. This aids the learning experience as we all support each other. The social life isn't half bad either!

Evan and Matt



The Extended Rural Cohort was developed through the Northern Victoria Regional Medical Education Network (NVRMEN) project, an initiative of:



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