

Rural Health Matters

MONASH RURAL HEALTH STAFF NEWSLETTER

FEBRUARY 2017

RURAL SUMMER RESEARCH SCHOLARSHIPS A SUCCESS

The 2016-17 summer has been the biggest yet for summer research scholarships across Monash Rural Health with 15 students working on 9 projects across four sites: Mildura, Bendigo, Churchill and Traralgon.

The research projects ranged from workforce dynamics to injury prevention for cricket players to improving medicine information for breast feeding women, and provided opportunities for collaboration with regional health partners and across the school.

Collaborative research

Dr Adelle McArdle and Associate Professor Shane Bullock supervised two students working on a project to improve the medicine information available to breastfeeding women. "We got advice from Bernie [Ward] before starting the project" said Adelle observing that it was good to have two students working on the one project. Shane agreed. "It was not as isolating for the students and they drew on their different background skills. They were constantly bouncing off each other."

The students did a lot of the scoping work looking at what kinds of information were available to clinicians about the safety of medications during breastfeeding. Anne Leversha made an excellent contribution to the project.



All work and no play: scholarship students in Bendigo had some fun on their last day. L-R Wei Han San, Nidhushi Tilak Ramesh, Katherine Allman and Mark Fogarty.

Her expertise and experience was very valuable to the students and Anne facilitated input from a senior hospital pharmacist working at Monash Health regarding the key parameters suggested by the students that would be most helpful for clinicians when making a decision about medication for breastfeeding women.

While that consultation was in train, they also began to think about the best way to make the information available. A mobile app seemed to be the obvious solution. So the team contacted Mildura-based Dr Naj Soomro, a passionate advocate of the use of technology in medicine, to seek his advice. Under his guidance, the students created basic storyboards for

an app and a prototype. Naj thought the concept was "fantastic" and said he wished he'd had access to something like this when he was doing AMC accreditation recently.

Surprising autonomy

For many students the summer research scholarship was their first experience working on a research project. A common theme was surprise at the level of autonomy they were given by excellent supervisors; some thought they would simply be doing data entry. Many expressed interest in continuing work on the projects beyond the term of the scholarship, planning to squeeze time in around their study obligations.

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STAFF NEWS



Introducing Lecturer, Dr David Reser

David Reser has joined the School of Rural Health in Churchill as a Lecturer in Year A (Theme III) and a member of the Assessment team.

Dr Reser completed his PhD in Neuroscience in 2000 at the Albert Einstein College of Medicine in NY, USA. He came to the Department of Physiology at the Clayton campus in 2006, following a career in the biopharmaceutical industry.

David has a longstanding interest in systems neuroscience and understanding how sensory signals are processed in the brain. His latest research surrounds the mammalian claustrum, a poorly understood area of the forebrain which seems to play a role in how the brain decides what stimuli in the environment are important at any given moment.

David is committed to involving students in research, and in helping them to identify specific research questions based on their areas of interest and curiosity.

Work days:

Mon, Tue, Wed, Fri

Contact details

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Congratulations Dr Ranjana Srivastava AO

Dr Ranjana Srivastava has been a guest speaker to cohorts of Year A Graduate Entry Medical Students for many years now. In the 2017 Australia Day Honours last week, Ranjana received an Order of Australia award bestowed for service to medicine in the field of doctor-patient communication.

Ranjana is an oncologist and author of several books on doctor-patient communication and has written for The Guardian for some years. Ranjana is a Fulbright Scholar, a Monash MBBS graduate and did her internship at Latrobe Regional Hospital working under Dr Alan Scarlett, so there is a rural connection. We heartily congratulate Ranjana on this well-deserved award.

New Graduate Research Coordinator



Dr Matthew McGrail has been appointed the Monash Rural Health Graduate Research Coordinator. He replaces coordinators, Dr Matthew Carroll and Dr Bernadette Ward, who have led this program so capably over the past few years. Our sincere thanks go to Matthew and Bernadette for all of their work during this time. It is very much appreciated. All enquiries and requests relating to the MRH Graduate Research Program should be directed to Clare Plozza (clare.plozza@monash.edu) in the first instance.

SUMMER RESEARCH SCHOLARSHIPS (CONT.)

Experience with short projects

The students spent between two and five weeks working on projects which required supervisors to design tasks that could be completed within that period. With the upcoming introduction of six-week scholarly intensives, the summer research scholarships have been good practice for designing and supervising short-term relevant tasks.

Monash Rural Health plans to offer a series of winter research scholarships in late June and July. Calls for projects across the University will be made in early April. If you want advice on offering a project or would like to talk to past supervisors about their experience, contact Lisa Lavey: srh-resoffice@monash.edu or 5440 9082.

See more stories about students' experiences on the Rural Health news site: srh-news.blogspot.com.au/search/label/summer%20scholarship

CHURCHILL PREPARES FOR FIRST MD COHORT

Staff at MRH Churchill are preparing to welcome the 2017 student cohort who will commence the Year A program on 13 February. The arrival of this year's student group brings with it a number of noteworthy changes. They are enrolled in the new Monash Bachelor of Medical Science / MD course.

The domestic students have been selected from Monash only courses, consisting of graduates from the Bachelor of Biomedical Science, Bachelor of Science, Bachelor of Physiotherapy and Bachelor of Pharmacy courses. This is the largest cohort starting the graduate entry medicine course since the commencement of the course in 2008. Ninety-five students have accepted offers, including 20 international students. The international students are mostly from Canada and Singapore.

Fortunately for staff, there are no changes to the Year A curriculum as a result of the establishment of the Monash MD program.

EAST GIPPSLAND WELCOMES 2017 STUDENTS



Health services across East Gippsland have been gearing up to host 70 Monash medical students throughout 2017, in placements lasting from two weeks to a full academic year.

The Monash Rural Health Bairnsdale site will host nine Year 4C students, including two at Bairnsdale Medical Group, one at McLeod Street Medical Centre, two at Cunningham Arm Medical Centre, two at Gippsland Lakes Community Health and two at Orbost Medical Centre. Students will be in tutorials at Monash Rural Health Bairnsdale most Mondays and Fridays and in their allocated medical practices on Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursdays.

Throughout the year, Bairnsdale Regional Health Service will host 11 final year medical students who will undertake six-week placements in aged care, emergency or surgery. Ten students in their first year of clinical training will also be rotating - four at a time - through Bairnsdale Regional Health Service from Sale. They will spend four weeks at a time in surgery and medicine. An additional forty students in their second year of study will undertake two-week placements in May and September.

STARTING YEAR 4C IN SOUTH GIPPSLAND



The 2017 Year 4C students in South Gippsland have a busy year ahead and have launched themselves enthusiastically into the integrated program. They are placed right across South Gippsland from Foster to Wonthaggi, and including Korumburra and Leongatha. They also have intensive placements at Warragul and Traralgon, so will get to experience health services across the Gippsland region. In all we have a wonderful group of students and it looks to be a rich and productive year ahead.

BENDIGO BANK AWARD FOR MED STUDENTS LAUNCHED

A new collaboration with Bendigo Bank will enable Monash medical students on placement in rural towns to link up with those communities on health-related projects. The initiative sees students work with representatives of local communities to develop and implement a project relevant to the health needs of those communities or link in with existing projects. At the end of the students' placement they will make a presentation to members of the local community and one project will win the Bendigo Bank Community Award.

The award is the brain child of Bendigo GP Dr Dennis O'Connor, Bendigo Bank's Scott Elkington, and Castlemaine Health's Jen Oxley. Speaking at the launch of the Community Award on Monday, Scott Elkington said the Bendigo Bank understood partnerships and the importance of social capital. Dr O'Connor who is also Monash Rural Health Bendigo's Year 4C Academic Coordinator, said the aim of the initiative was to give students a chance to give something back to the communities who generously supported their placements.

Linking with passionate community representatives through the Bendigo Bank will make certain the projects filled a genuine need and give students real links into the people who live in the regions.



LEARNING FROM YOUR FAMILY GP

Not many medical students can choose to go and study with the obstetrician who was present at their birth, but Jessica Paynter figures she can learn a lot from the Swan Hill GP who delivered her, Dr Ernan Hession. Jessica is one of eight Monash medical students doing an 18-week placement under the guidance of Dr Hession at the Swan Hill Primary Health Medical Centre.

The 21-year-old from Nyah near Swan Hill is the first in her family to study medicine; it was childhood experiences of the local medical workforce that got her thinking about medicine as a career.



There weren't many female GPs in Swan Hill when she was growing up, she remembers. "There's a lot more now, but I had the impression when I was young that there weren't many female doctors at all."

Seeing an opening, enjoying physical activity and with an interest in science, Jessica thought medicine was a good fit, and she likes the Monash model. "I picked the ERC [Extended Rural Cohort stream] because I wanted to study rurally. I knew I had the option to come home and do a placement."

She's well aware of the importance of maintaining connections in sustaining a community. "If you don't keep connections with a community, it just dies," she said. Many of her friends also studied health sciences and some are returning to Swan Hill now. "One of my friends got a graduate nursing position in Swan Hill this year and another has got a new job as a speech pathologist."

Will she be back too? She's not sure yet where her career interests lie, although this placement is a "little trial" return to Swan Hill. "I'll probably do a few junior years in a bigger centre and come back when I've specialised. I came in [to the medicine course] thinking I wanted to do general practice. I like the look of the GP lifestyle, especially rurally. It's a lot more hands-on and keeping your skills up-to-date is important. A lot of GPs in Swan Hill do a lot of work in ED and have paediatric and other specialist diplomas."

This semester studying with Dr Hession will certainly give her hands-on experience of working as a rural GP before she returns to Bendigo for the rest of the year.

While it's a big year for a medical student returning home for a placement, it won't be all hard work. The netball club she used to play for is trying to recruit her to come and play again while she's in Swan Hill. It might be hard to resist those old connections.

A CHANCE TO TRY SPORTS MEDICINE IN MILDURA



With a history of playing competitive softball, Singapore-born medical student Nina Chua knows too well about sports injuries. "I did a lot of training and as a result had an overuse injury." So while she visited a sports doctor and physiotherapists during rehabilitation, she did a lot of research. The more she read, the more interested she became in sports medicine.

It's a very small field and the medicine program doesn't give students any exposure to sports medicine during their clinical training years. So a summer research scholarship in sports medicine in Mildura offered an opportunity to gain some experience. Nina had been to Monash Rural Health in Mildura during her Year 2 rural placement. "That's why I was comfortable coming here."

For two weeks she's been working on a project with Dr Naj Soomro which explores injury prevention training for fast bowlers in cricket. "I've never played cricket, I only learned the rules this week," she laughed. But she figured it was similar to softball and baseball and was keen to take it on.

The project involved writing a research protocol for an evidence-based cricket-specific injury prevention program, which she and Dr Soomro hope to submit in the Journal of Physiotherapy. During this process she has learnt how to design a cluster randomised control trial.

The injury prevention program is still under development. Among the first "guinea pigs" were Nina, Dr Soomro and one of the Mildura staff members. "We trialled the program in the hallway which was quite hilarious," she said. That resulted in some modifications to the program before they took it to weekly training for the cricket team that Dr Soomro plays for. The team's feedback resulted in further modifications and the altered program will go back to their next training session.

Dr Soomro is a keen advocate of the use of technology in research and plans to develop a website similar to FIFA's online warm-up program for soccer players. That's outside the scope of Nina's two weeks in Mildura, but she's keen to continue her involvement. This year will be a major one for Nina. She begins her clinical training back in Melbourne and also plays on the Monash baseball team. Squeezing research work into that requires a big commitment. "I'm interested in this and I like it, so it will be fine," she said confidently. "And I might try out some of this on the baseball team too."

MEET THE MABEL TEAM



The MABEL team has been hard at work already this year, at their monthly meeting early in February. A longstanding collaboration between Monash University and the University of Melbourne, MABEL (mabel.org.au) is a unique longitudinal study of Australian doctors and their medical practices and models of care. Monash Rural Health, principally Chief Investigator, Dr Matthew McGrail, supported by Dr Deborah Russell and Dr Belinda O'Sullivan, lead the rural health supply and distribution theme which is a core element.

MABEL research forum

The Centre for Research Excellence in Medical Workforce Dynamics, which runs the MABEL study, is planning its next research forum on 25 May 2017 at the Melbourne Business School. Monash Rural Health staff are welcome to attend to learn more about rural medical workforce issues and meet key stakeholders. Contact Michelle Best (mabel-survey@unimelb.edu.au) to be added to the email list to receive updates.

NEW GRANT FOR STUDY OF VIC PODIATRISTS: PAIGE

The availability of sufficient allied health workers in rural and remote locations remains critical for the management of chronic illness by enabling timely and ongoing primary and sub-specialist service delivery within broader healthcare teams.

Dr Matthew McGrail, Dr Deborah Russell and Dr Belinda O'Sullivan have had recent grant success collaborating in a team led by Dr Cylie Williams (Monash University, Department of Physiotherapy) with Professor Hylton Menz and Professor Terry Haines to secure an Australian Podiatry Education and Research Foundation grant.

This research will specifically explore factors related to the work-life balance of Victorian podiatrists, emulating work of the MABEL national survey of doctors. The research findings will inform how to best support building the rural podiatry workforce, with hopes to expand in the future to other health professions. No study of this scope has been done on the podiatry workforce to date, opening up new and exciting avenues for allied health workforce research.

NINE-YEAR ELMORE STUDY WRAPS UP



Dr Deborah Russell, Kathy Tuohey, Emeritus Professor John Humphreys at Elmore

Since 2008, the Elmore Primary Health Service (EPHS) has been engaged in important research with Monash University. This nine-year longitudinal study has been evaluating in detail the performance, sustainability and quality of health care provided in one small Australian rural community.

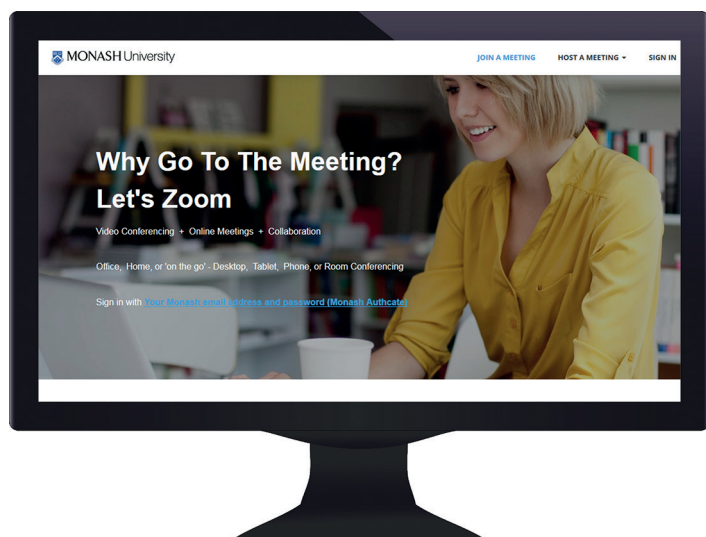
Research monitoring key performance indicators over time show that EPHS is performing at a very high level in delivering accessible, comprehensive, high quality primary health care, with many aspects of health promotion, prevention of ill-health, and delivery of acute care, after-hours and follow-up rehabilitation available to local residents.

The project has now concluded. It has resulted in seven peer-reviewed publications and six presentations at major national and international conferences. Importantly, too, the research findings have benefited the health service immensely through contributing to quality assurance, informing health service expansion and many other improvements within the service itself. The EPHS has been a role model for many other small rural communities which have contacted Elmore to ascertain how the service has been able to maintain the provision of high quality primary health care services to its local community as well as to surrounding communities.

Over the years many staff have been involved in the research, and made important contributions. Special mention must be made of the key project management role of Dr Rachel Tham in the earlier phases of the research, Kathy Tuohey, who has been instrumental in overseeing the research at EPHS throughout its duration and Dr Adel Asaid has been a stalwart partner in the research, and without whom the study could not have taken place. Over recent years, Dr Deborah Russell and Lisa Lavey have undertaken the research at Monash University, with ongoing assistance from Emeritus Professor John Humphreys, who initiated the study almost a decade ago.

Through their involvement over the years, members of the Elmore community and staff from the EPHS should take great pride in having contributed to the development of important new knowledge on what is required in order to ensure that rural Australians can obtain high quality, comprehensive, accessible and sustainable primary health care services. Thank you, Elmore.

ALL MONASH STAFF NOW HAVE ZOOM LICENCES



The Zoom videoconference service has been updated to a site licence. This means that all Monash user accounts are now considered 'Pro' or 'Corporate' accounts with all the features and none of the limits. All staff can now schedule, host and record Zoom meetings.

A full list of Zoom's features is available from the Zoom website (zoom.us/feature) and information about Zoom at Monash is on the eSolutions intranet (intranet.monash.edu.au/esolutions/staff/conferencing/zoom-conferencing.html)

MAKE REGISTRATIONS EASY



Image: Bswarup Ganguly

If you're running an event, managing registrations manually by email can be a lot of work. Here's a couple of easier ways to do it.

Google Forms

Create a Google Form that collects all the information you need (e.g. name, contact details, dietary needs) and send a link to the form with your invitation. Registrations are automatically collected in a spreadsheet. You can even set up notifications to send confirmation to attendees and an alert to you that people have registered.

Online event managers

If your event is free, online registration services like Eventbrite (eventbrite.com.au) are also free to use. They'll issue a ticket to your attendees and collate all the data you need to manage your event.

If you'd like to learn more, contact Helen Cronin (helen.cronin@monash.edu or 5440 9041)



UPCOMING EVENTS

Journal club/research seminars, 12-1pm

Wednesday 1 March - Research seminar
(Facilitator: Eli Ristevski)

Wednesday 15 March - Journal club
(Facilitator: Dennis O'Connor)

Wednesday 19 April - Research seminar
(Facilitator: Belinda O'Sullivan)

Wednesday 24 May - Journal club
(Facilitator: Marg Simmons)

Thursday 15 June - Research seminar
(Facilitator: Keith Sutton)

Wednesday 19 July - Journal club
(Facilitator: David Reser)

Wednesday 16 August - Research seminar
(Facilitator: David Campbell)

Wednesday 13 September - Journal club
(Facilitator: Anne Leversha)

Wednesday 18 October - Research seminar
(Facilitator: Susan Waller)

Wednesday 22 November - Journal club
(Facilitator: Marianne Tare)

Watch your email for Zoom details or register to attend at rural-health-journal-club.blogspot.com.au/

MABEL Research Forum

Thursday 25 May 2017

The fifth MABEL Research Forum will be held at the Melbourne Business School, University of Melbourne, Parkville. A half-day MABEL data users workshop will also be held the afternoon before the forum on Wednesday 24 May at the Melbourne Institute. Email Michelle Best (mabel-survey@unimelb.edu.au) for details of both events.

BETTER TEACHING, BETTER LEARNING 2016 MAGAZINE

The Office of Learning and Teaching has released its first Better Teaching, Better Learning magazine. Articles include Monash's new educational professional development framework and the Education Technology Roadmap, a focus on the student Peer Assisted Study Sessions (PASS) and profiles of education designers and library faculty teams.

Printed copies of the magazine will be available at the Better Teaching, Better Learning Showcase on Wednesday 15 February 2017, or see the online version: intranet.monash.edu.au/learningandteaching/assets/files/btbl-mag-2016.pdf