The Australian and New Zealand Association for Medical Educators (ANZAME), now renamed Australian and New Zealand Association for Health Professional Educators (ANZAHP), holds an annual conference that aims to recognize, facilitate and disseminate education research among health professional educators, researchers and students. I attended one such conference in July 2010 where I presented a poster of my summer research project conducted in conjunction with Gippsland Medical School (GMS).

Presenting at a national conference like the ANZAME Conference proved to be an eye-opening experience marked with plenty of networking opportunities with like-minded individuals.

My brief stay at Townsville, Queensland (where the conference was held) was made more pleasant by the company of two of my fellow third-year medical student colleagues from GMS who also presented at the conference. We each benefited tremendously from our presentation experiences at the conference. My personal lessons learnt include:

1. Learning to tailor my presentation to suit a targeted, professional audience.
2. Learning how to best build rapport with an audience in a short timeframe e.g. by maintaining eye contact, assimilating appropriate light-hearted humour into my presentation at the right time and keeping my presentation succinct.
3. Learning how to field questions from the audience, to think on my feet.
4. Engaging in and facilitating brief discussion with a professional audience during question-and-answer time.

One of the aims of my project is to explore avenues for greater community involvement in medical education. There is currently a lack of consensus as to a method for inducting the community into all areas of medical education and it is my hope that my project will fill this void.

At the ANZAME Conference, I was also able to network with a few other medical educationalists who are conducting research of a similar interest to that of my project i.e. exploring the role of community in medical education. We are currently in email correspondence and are exchanging views on each other’s research findings. This is my first experience with ‘behind-the-scenes’ work. I am both thrilled and grateful for this opportunity to be a part of the work that goes into the planning and executing of the medical curriculum.

Last but not least, I would like to thank the faculty and GMS for making this trip possible.