Welcome to new staff and students

Professor Judi Walker
Chief Executive of the Rural Clinical School, Professor of Rural Health

Welcome to the first edition of the RCS bulletin for 2007. We are delighted to be starting the year with a number of new staff joining the team, and with an enthusiastic contingent of 21 resident fifth and sixth-year medical students, as well as increasing numbers of short-term nursing, pharmacy and other allied health students.

In 2007, the RCS is utilising both the Burnie and Mersey campuses of the North West Regional Hospital, along with 15 general practices, and 5 “remote” practices in Queenstown, Rosebery, Smithton, King Island and Sheffield, for clinical learning opportunities for students this year. The medical education program includes a comprehensive tutorial schedule generously supported by a range of clinicians working in both acute services and primary care. In general, medical students will spend approximately 80% of their time in the clinical setting, learning alongside other health professionals and with supervision from doctors at various stages of their training.

2007 will be a year of further expansion for the RCS, with Stage 3 of a capital works program being planned to develop the existing understorey of the Burnie campus building. This will create additional teaching facilities for medical, nursing and pharmacy students, junior doctors, clinical psychology interns and nursing postgraduates.

The RCS will be hosting visits by a number of medical students in the next few months. Fourth-year medical students from Hobart will be visiting after Easter to get a feel for our academic program and to see facilities first-hand. For many, this will be a good chance to get a taste of the beautiful North-West Coast and will help them to make better informed decisions as to where they would prefer to study in their clinical years. Smaller groups of Year 3 and 4 students will be completing 2-week rural placements at the RCS throughout the year.

Fifty-six second-year medical students will be with us for part of their Rural Week program in early May. Their visit is an integral part of the new 5-year curriculum which includes a staged introduction to rural medicine throughout the course.

I look forward to building on our existing partnerships in 2007, and to a very exciting and productive year in rural health.

Kind regards

Meet the students

Twenty-one medical students are undertaking the fifth and sixth year of the MBBS at the RCS this year. The group includes four students with family links in the North-West.

Joanne Ambrose is one such student who is from Burnie. Read Jo’s thoughts about returning to the North-West Coast on page 3.

As well, there are a number of students from Hobart, the mainland and two from overseas.

There are six final-year students, some of whom are considering internships in the region if the opportunity arises.

The Rural Clinical School has championed a “grow your own” approach to the recruitment and training of health professionals, so it is rewarding to see students returning to the region at this stage of their careers in medicine, and considering future options here as well.

Students have just completed their first attachment in what is a busy and challenging timetable. The RCS will also be supporting nursing, pharmacy and social work students on clinical placement in the region during Semester 1.

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New staff at the RCS

Associate Head of School:
Associate Professor Helen Malcolm has taken up the position of Associate Head (Rural Medicine). She is responsible for the coordination of the undergraduate rural medical program at the RCS and for clinical academic leadership to the team delivering the integrated learning program to Year 5 and 6 medical students.

Associate Professor Malcolm worked extensively in rural Victoria, the UK and Tanzania, before practising as a GP in Scottsdale, Bendigo and Launceston.

Her main interests in medicine are in rural practice, mental health, and research in primary care. She has an impressive rural health research and publication track record, and is a registered graduate supervisor.

Senior Lecturers in Rural Medical Practice:
Dr Bryn Parry and Dr Peter Arvier’s appointments add further depth to the core academic team at the RCS. They will be involved in Case Based Learning delivery and student assessment and mentoring. Dr Parry will also be involved in delivering Extended Clinical Teaching at his East Devonport practice, and Dr Arvier will coordinate the RCS Trauma Course for Year 5/6 medical students at Smithton this year.

New School Manager:
Ms Kate Brown moved from Hobart to join the RCS in early January. Her primary responsibilities are the financial, human and physical resource management of the School.

Kate is also involved in the support of students and academics.

Manager, Marketing & Community Engagement:
Ms Rosalie Maynard started with the RCS at the end of February. Rosalie has worked with the University for a number of years. She will be responsible for marketing activities, and will be working closely with the RCS Community Advisory Board.

Clinical Skills Educator:
Ms Lynn Greives, Nurse Educator at the RCS, will join the Clinical Skills and Simulation Centre at the RCS in mid-April as the Clinical Skills Educator, to enhance the range of teaching and support to clinicians and students using the Centre.

This new position has been created to maximise the transition of learning from the simulated environment to the clinical environment.

Lynn will work closely with Skills Centre Manager, Maree Glieson.

New researchers based at the RCS:
Ms Trudy Schmidt is undertaking field work for the Menzies Research Institute as part of the 5-year nationwide ASPREE study investigating the effect of low-dose aspirin for the prevention of cardio-vascular events in older people.

Dr John Henshaw is a new PhD candidate in the area of pain management.

Students benefit from scholarships encouraging rural study

Australian Rotary Health Research Fund Scholarships:
RCS students. Mike Stoneman (Year 6) and Elena Kornaczewski (Year 5) have been awarded Australian Rotary Health Research Fund Scholarships worth $5000 per year.

They are among 26 recipients from 13 clinical schools around Australia.

As part of the scholarship, students will be teamed up with local Rotary clubs to encourage them to become part of the community.

Scholarship program coordinator, Cheryl Deguara said “It’s difficult enough moving to a new place, but when you’re also working very long hours and studying, it can be very difficult to feel part of the community.”

Wynyard Rotary Club Scholarship in Rural Medicine:
The Rotary Club of Wynyard awarded their inaugural Scholarship in Rural Medicine to RCS student Allison Neilson earlier in February.

The scholarship aims to encourage students from the North-West Coast studying medicine to return to their home location for the clinical practice years.

Allison was raised in Wynyard and commenced Year 5 of the MBBS at the RCS this year.

As well as providing financial support for Allison over a two-year period, the scholarship includes support and mentoring through the membership of the Club which currently includes a number of retired GPs.

Allison Neilson (Photo courtesy of The Advocate)
What factors influenced your decision to study at the RCS?
I was born in Burnie and grew up here, going to Cooee Primary, Burnie High and Hellyer College. I came back so that I could spend more time with my family who are all still here, and have moved back in to live at home. I had heard that the teaching offered up here was of a high standard, and that past students have gained much from their time at the School.

What's it like being back in the region?
It's great being back. Burnie is a beautiful city with great beaches and scenery. Much has changed since 4 years ago when I left - the city has a great feeling about it and seems really progressive and as though it is going places. the people are friendly and we really feel welcome in the hospital.

How would you describe the overall experience so far?
Really positive and enjoyable. I have just finished my first rotation which was Paediatrics. We received great teaching and all the staff were enthusiastic to have us with them.

Which aspects of the program are you finding most useful/enjoyable?
Having small class sizes, and there being only a couple of students on each rotation is great. You get to really feel like part of a team and that you are valued.

What are you looking forward to during the year?
Gaining more clinical skills and becoming more confident on the wards. Also just spending time on each rotation learning about each specialty and finding what aspects of medicine I may be interested in for the future.

What's on in the Clinical Skills and Simulation Centre?

The Skills Centre has a busy year ahead. It was set up over a year ago to enhance patient safety by promoting inter-professional teaching and learning across health disciplines.

The Centre proved to be an excellent resource at the start of the year, being used as part of orientation for Junior Medical Officers, graduate nurses and fifth-year medical students, to both the North West Regional Hospital and the undergraduate medical program.

Experienced Nurse Educators from the North West Regional Hospital assisted participants to learn and practise procedural skills commonly performed in the daily work of practicing clinicians. These included venepuncture, IV cannulation and CPR.

Ongoing weekly skills training sessions will continue throughout 2007, with progression to more complex procedures as the year progresses.

A calendar showing each month's program is available from Maree Gleeson, Medical Education Advisor at the RCS - phone 6430 4553 or email Maree.Gleeson@utas.edu.au

Year 4 Medicine Rural Placement in the North-West

Four medical students spent two weeks based at the RCS recently for their rural placement, part of the fourth-year Clinical Specialties attachment. They enjoyed a demanding and busy schedule designed to give them first-hand experience of rural medicine, in both hospital and community contexts.

The students were impressed with the learning opportunities available to them in the region. They felt they had gained an understanding of patients as members of a community, and something of the services and issues patients have in accessing health care.

They said the program challenged them to use refined communication skills and built their self-confidence, so they were able to function in a team of health professionals, and to make the most of learning in a number of different clinical settings.

They appreciated meeting a range of clinicians and health professionals who “were really keen to teach and seemed to enjoy having us around.”

Many thanks to all of the clinicians and health professionals who gave so generously of their time, and to the RCS admin team for putting a great program together.

All four students said they will now consider the RCS for their final years of study. Similar placements are planned throughout the year.
9th National Rural Health Conference, Albury NSW: A number of RCS staff and four students were among 1200 delegates from all over Australia at this conference earlier in March. Final year medical student, Maureen Ryan, found the conference to be “informative and inspirational.” She said it gave her a great chance to meet up with other students and workers in the healthcare field, and to hear stories of successful approaches to improve community health. “The future of rural health looks very promising,” she said.

Professor Judi Walker presented three papers along with colleagues from Tasmania and interstate, titled:
♦ “The rural and regional ambulance paramedic: moving beyond emergency response”
♦ “Breaking down barriers: building relationships through multi-disciplinary education for palliative care providers in rural and remote Tasmania”
♦ “Firefighter dentistry: The impact of the supply of dentists on rural public dental services”

Professor Walker also co-facilitated a pre-conference workshop reviewing research into an expanded scope of practice for ambulance paramedics in rural and regional areas.

Tips, Tools and Resources: More than 35 enthusiastic clinicians took part in an information session held prior to the start of the academic year to share and compare tips for good teaching practice. Associate Professor Helen Malcolm emphasised the major objectives of the clinical program for 2007 and encouraged participants to continue their excellent work in teaching and mentoring RCS students. Clinical teachers were made aware of the support and resources available through both the RCS and the wider University.

Professor Judi Walker thanked the region’s health community for their tremendous support of the RCS, and said it was vital for the delivery of high-quality teaching programs and greatly appreciated. Similar information and education meetings are planned throughout the year.

About the Rural Clinical School:
The Rural Clinical School is funded through the Australian Government’s Department of Health and Ageing, and is part of the University of Tasmania’s Faculty of Health Science.

The RCS is part of a national network of Rural Clinical Schools which:
• provides undergraduate clinical training opportunities for students of Medicine, Pharmacy and Nursing through the respective University Schools.
• prepares graduates to meet the health needs of rural communities
• supports health practitioners involved in student supervision in rural and remote areas
• actively promotes health services for the North West region through education and research.

Key Dates for 2007:

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<th>Date Range</th>
<th>Event Description</th>
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<tr>
<td>5 - 11 April</td>
<td>Easter Break for all UTAS students</td>
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<td>12 - 14 April</td>
<td>Sponsored Visit, Year 4 medical students</td>
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<td>2 - 4 May</td>
<td>Rural Week, Year 2 medical students at RCS</td>
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<td>7 - 11 May</td>
<td>Student Vacation</td>
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<tr>
<td>14 May</td>
<td>Community Advisory Board meeting</td>
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<td>11 - 13 July</td>
<td>Year 10 Health Careers Camp</td>
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<td>6 - 10 August</td>
<td>Student Vacation</td>
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<td>28 - 30 September</td>
<td>Trauma Course (proposed dates)</td>
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<td>5 - 9 November</td>
<td>Swot Vac and Final Exams</td>
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<td>19 November</td>
<td>Community Advisory Board meeting</td>
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For more information about the Rural Clinical School or the material contained in this bulletin, please contact:
Rosalie Maynard
Manager, Marketing and Community Engagement
Phone: (03) 6430 5920 Email: Rosalie.Maynard@utas.edu.au

Rural Clinical School
University of Tasmania
Private Bag 3513 Burnie 7320
Phone: (03) 6430 4550
Fax: (03) 6431 5670
Email: rural.clinical.school@utas.edu.au
Web: www.rcs.utas.edu.au