

Health reminder for rural men

Farm Weekly, 16 Jun, 2011 09:57 AM



INTERNATIONAL Men's Health Week is a reminder for health service providers in rural and remote communities and men themselves to get together to protect and improve male health and wellbeing.

In the past, the archetypal masculine attitudes of 'unbreakable blokes' and the rural ideology which promoted rugged individualism may have discouraged rural men from seeking help on their health. This contributed to the situation in which rural men have poorer health and lower life expectancy today than their fellow citizens.

For this reason people at the recent **11th National Rural Health Conference** welcomed the consultative processes and plans brought together in the **National Men's Health Policy**.

Launched in May 2010 and the first of its kind in Australia, the policy provides a framework for achieving equal health outcomes for all males, particularly those at risk of poor health. This is particularly important for rural men, who are more likely than their city counterparts to experience chronic conditions and health risk factors. Overall, male injury and death rates increase with remoteness.

This week's report from the **Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW)** shows that many Australian men could be doing more to protect and improve their health.

Although Australian male life expectancy, at 79 years, is the fourth highest in the OECD, men need to be aware of the facts about their health. **Only about 40 per cent discuss healthy lifestyle issues with health professionals but a greater proportion of emergency department presentations are by men.**

The National Men's Health Policy encourages men to take simple steps to improve their health such as sharing their family history with a GP, knowing their healthy weight, and quitting smoking. It also has principles for programs for Aboriginal and Torres Strait

MEN'S SHEDS—WHAT ARE THEY?

The modern Men's Shed is an updated version of the shed in the backyard that has long been a part of Australian culture. Men's Sheds are springing up all around Australia. If you looked inside one you might see a number of men restoring furniture, perhaps restoring bicycles for a local school, maybe making Mynah bird traps or fixing lawn

mowers or making a kids cubby house for Camp Quality to raffle. You might also see a few young men working with the older men learning new skills and maybe also learning something about life from the men they work with. You will see tea-bags, coffee cups and a comfortable area where men can sit and talk. You will probably also see an area where men can learn to cook for themselves or they can learn how to contact their families by computer.

So what is so special about this new type of Men's Shed? Most men have learned from our culture that they don't talk about feelings and emotions. There has been little encouragement for men to take an interest in their own health and well-being. Unlike women, most men are reluctant to talk about their emotions and that means that they usually don't ask for help. Probably because of this many men are less healthy than women, they drink more, take more risks and they suffer more from isolation, loneliness and depression. Relationship breakdown, retrenchment or early retirement from a job, loss of children following divorce, physical or mental illness are just some of the problems that men find it hard to deal with on their own.

Good health is based on many factors including feeling good about yourself, being productive and valuable to your community, connecting to friends and maintaining an active body and an active mind. Becoming a member of a Men's Shed gives a man that safe and busy environment where he can find many of these things in an atmosphere of old-fashioned mateship. And, importantly, there is no pressure. Men can just come and have a yarn and a cuppa if that is all they're looking for.



RURAL MEDICAL SCHOLARSHIPS—CLASS OF 2010/11

The past 12 months in the Northern Rivers have been spectacular. Prior to moving to Brunswick Heads, I had high-hopes this placement would provide sound medical training -mainly due to the scarceness of other medical students all vying for supervisor attention. However, the region provided a far richer experience than simply the medicine.

I was placed in a General Practice under the supervision of a single doctor. One-on-one tuition, almost unheard of in the city. To my great fortune, my GP supervisor was not only a skilled medical specialist, but also an educator, community advocate and family man. I was given an insight into the personal side of medicine, a relationship that I had not experienced in a busy city hospital setting. This was a

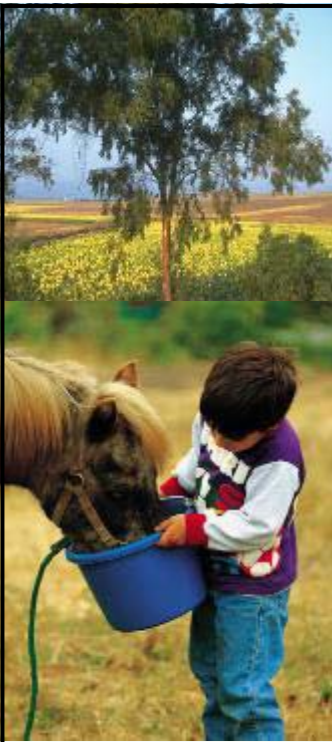
most valuable part of my entire experience; hearing stories from a man well practiced in medicine of both a clinical and personal nature. He provoked me to think about more than the information that can be read in a textbook. He personified the phrase “treat the patient as a whole, not just their illness”.

This type of medico is not the exception in this area either. Numerous physicians gave of their time and clinical expertise, often without academic title or financial reimbursement. We (there was 8 of us from the one university) received outstanding clinical skills training, clinical reasoning and decision-making that challenged our current mindsets of city-practice. All the staff involved in our education were so helpful and always supportive.

The other benefits of living in this area cannot be completely mentioned in such a small report. The word “lifestyle” is often used to depict the personal satisfaction that is experienced by an individual from their day-to-day activities, and implies inclusion of the *important* things such as family, recreation, work satisfaction and social involvement. The Northern Rivers ticks all the lifestyle boxes. In fact in my case it re-defined what “lifestyle” could encompass.

Having very little association with Rotary prior to living in the Northern Rivers I was eager to become involved. I attended several Rotary meetings in the area. I thoroughly enjoyed all these meetings and found all Rotarians to be extremely welcoming and supportive, as well as enthusiastic about the Australian Rotary Health Rural Scholarship. I was fortunate enough to attend a Rotary District Conference in Yamba a a guest speaker. This was a personal highlight. I witnessed individual Rotary clubs contributing together to support various humanitarian causes-both domestic and abroad. From a poverty-stricken orphanage to the latest in local medical technology, Rotarians were contributing with a spirit of conviction, generosity and compassion. This was a remarkable experience.

**Mat Doyle—University of Wollongong
Sponsored by RC of Illawarra Sunrise**



Kathryn Knight

Charles Sturt University

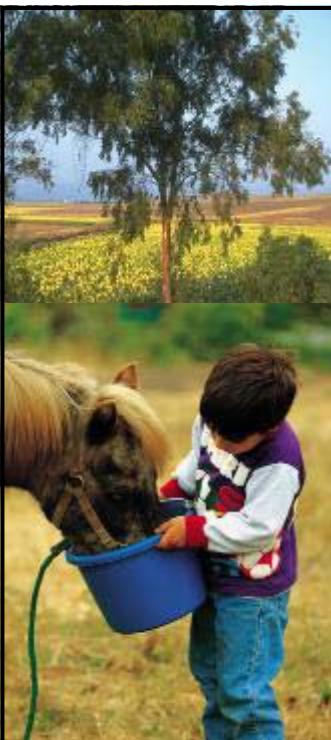
Rural Placement—Lithgow Hospital

Post Grad Year January 2011—Dubbo Hospital

"Four months into my new graduate registered nursing role and I am learning something new each day and realising just how much I have to learn. I have just transferred into a rural paediatric ward from the operating suite and the two roles for the registered nurse could not be more varied. The operating suite was a blessed introduction to nursing and provided a wonderful opportunity to improve knowledge of anatomy and physiology. Starting in the operating suite was like starting back at square one. Theatre nursing is not focused on greatly in the Bachelor of Nursing; therefore I was required to learning strict sterile technique, instruments names and procedures almost from scratch. The staff however was brilliant at supporting and taking time to teach me the principles of scouting. I appreciated the skill of both scout, scrub and anaesthetic nurse, in not only knowing what was required for each procedure but how to use it and when it would be required. One of the greatest challenges I found was developing the ability to predict what the scrub nurse or surgeon would require and produce it before request in order to be time efficient and effective. Nearing the end on my time in theatre the opportunity to work in paediatrics presented itself unexpectedly, paediatrics had been an area which I had a great interest in and so I was excited to receive the opportunity to gain some experience there.

It was daunting commencing paediatric work when most of my experience had been in geriatrics however I have loved work in the children's ward. I have had the opportunity to attend study days held by my facility and frequent in-services on a variety of topics from insulin pumps to CVC lines. I am constantly being challenged to learn new skills and ways of communicating with paediatric patients and their families. The variety that the children's ward presents enables you to build skills in nursing both neonates and adolescents. An experienced team has further facilitated my learning comprised of nurses, educators, physio's, interns, registrars and consultants. It has reinforced the importance of a multidisciplinary team and efficient communication between each member of the multidisciplinary team, particularly during ward rounds.

Thus far my new graduate year has been challenging in not only adjusting to full time work but learning new skills and trying to remember all the things that we were taught at university. I am however looking forward to the remainder of my new graduate year and all the learning experiences that it will present."



RURAL DOCTORS SCHOLARSHIPS
Announcing recipients for 2011

Kimberley Jungalwalla

Monash University School of Rural Health
(Bendigo)

Sponsored by Rotary Club of Bentleigh
Moorabbin Central

Melissa Renzenbrink

UNSW Rural Clinical School (Albury)
Rotary Club of Belvoir Wodonga

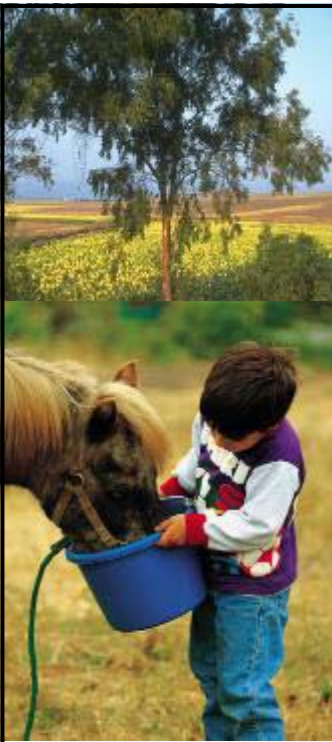
Renee Morley

Sydney University School of Rural Health
Rotary Club of Caringbah

Renee Morley

University of Wollongong Rural Health
Rotary Club of Illawarra Sunrise





Tammy Seckold

Central Queensland University

Rural Placement—*Innisfail District Hospital*

Post Grad Year January 2011—*Cairns Base Hospital*

"As our plans to relocate from the sleepy coastal town of Mission Beach to the tropical hub of Cairns finally came into place Mother Nature was brewing plans of her own. Only two weeks before our big move the storm of the century hit. Returning to our home we found most of our possessions to be wet and ruined. With the aid of others in the community the clean up was to begin. Neighbours, friends and even strangers showed us the kindness, generosity and unity we had come to know from this small town and with their help.

The department I had been allocated for this position was medical imaging, an area of the hospital that I had no previous experience with or even a clear knowledge of the nurses role in that environment. I was soon to find that medical imaging is a very diverse and interesting field. The department contains everything from x-ray, ultrasound and ct scanner through to a recently opened MRI machine. Being the most northern public facility with these diagnostic capabilities the medical imaging department at Cairns base hospital services a very large area stretching from as low on the coast as Cardwell through to the Torre Strait Islands including Cooktown and inland past Atherton. This coupled with the regions tourism industry makes for a great diversity in the background and culture of the patients. The department is not only a means of creating medical imaging for diagnostic purposes but also performs a great deal of medical procedures including biopsy's, aspirations and PICC line insertions all at the same time as providing care to patients from all areas of the hospital especially emergency.

Although I have not been working for very long the kindness and closeness of the small number of nurses (less than 10) in this department has been amazing. All the nursing staff and also the radiographers and radiologists have been very supportive and patient as I have come to settle into this position. I have found working in this area challenging and interesting and with the guidance of the other team members I have began to assist in procedures, run the CT section and work in MRI. I look forward to learning as much as I can and developing my nursing skills further as my partner and I rebuild our lives in this beautiful rural setting."



NURSING SCHOLARSHIPS ON OFFER

- 6 Parnell Rural Nursing Scholarships**
- 2 Rotary club of Sale Rural Nursing Scholarships**
- 1 Motto Fashion Indigenous Nursing Scholarship**

Scholarship available for 3rd Year Student only

This will encourage and influence the nursing students to consider pursuing a nursing career in Indigenous communities in Australia upon graduation. This Scholarship would have the benefit of enjoying the fellowship of Rotarians and also expose the candidate to aspects of rural community life.

Valued at \$12,500 per student



Margaret Buchanan

Queensland University of Technology

Final Placement Innisfail Hospital

Post Grad Year February 2011 – Mudgee Hospital

"After waiting seven months for my nursing registration to be processed by AHPRA, I was finally able to embark on my nursing career.....and what a wonderful journey it has been thus far. I moved to Mudgee at the end of 2010 with my husband and I commenced my graduate year at Mudgee District Hospital in February.

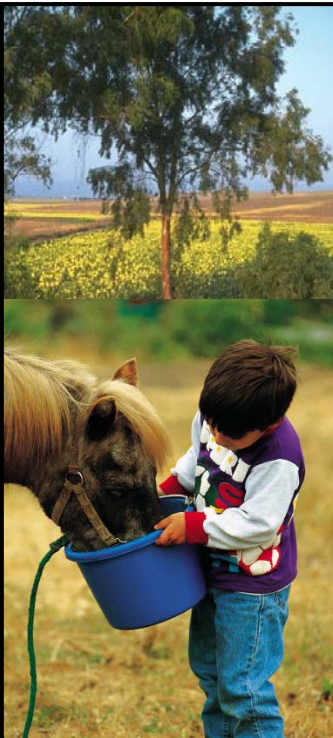
I was literally shaking in my boots as I fronted the hospital doors for my first shift as an RN. However, when I left the hospital that day, my nerves had subsided and had been replaced with genuine excitement and anticipation. The staff at Mudgee Hospital has been very supportive and welcoming and I feel very fortunate to be undertaking my graduate year at this hospital.

I have spent the past three months working on Tilecote Ward; a 28 bed ward which caters for paediatric, geriatric, palliative patients and everything in between. I love the diversity of rural nursing and each and every day has proven a valuable learning experience.

My practical learning experiences have been complemented by theory based sessions provided by the hospital. I have attended in-services focusing on infection control, diabetes, chest physio, dysphagia, malnutrition and community packages. I have also attended meetings with the nurse educator and other beginning professionals which have been used to consolidate, debrief and reflect on our experiences. Furthermore, I am looking forward to attending a two day 'Transition to Practice' workshop in Dubbo early in June.

My husband and I love the sense of community and pride in Mudgee. We have joined the local rugby and hockey teams and we enjoy showing visitors around the surrounding countryside, including trips to the beautiful wineries.

Yesterday, Rotary held a successful fundraising golf day at the Mudgee Golf Course to build a share house for University of Wollongong medical students completing their rural posting in Mudgee. The health community are very lucky to be affiliated with such a proactive and supporting charity."



If your Rotary Club would like to sponsor a Rural Doctor or Rural Nurse

it will cost

Rural Doctor Scholarships

are \$5,500 per year

AUSTRALIAN ROTARY HEALTH offers Scholarships Australia wide for medical students attending the 14 Rural Clinical Schools of Australia.

The aim of the Scholarships is to provide incentives for medical students to complete at least one year in a rural area. This will encourage and influence the medical students to consider pursuing a medical career in rural Australia upon graduation or following postgraduate medical studies. This Scholarship would have the benefit of enjoying the fellowship of Rotarians and also expose the candidate to aspects of rural community life.

Rural Nursing Scholarships

are \$13,750

Post Grad Year in Rural Placement

AUSTRALIAN ROTARY HEALTH is currently offering Scholarships—in country NSW and in Country Queensland (available in other States if required).

The aim of the Scholarships is to provide incentives for nursing students to complete their 3rd year major clinical placement and graduating year in a rural/remote area.

This will encourage and influence the nursing students to consider pursuing a nursing career in rural/remote Australia upon graduation. This Scholar would have the benefit of enjoying the fellowship of Rotarians and also expose the candidate to aspects of rural community life.



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