



**November 2005 Edition** - a newsletter for RAMUS Scholars, Mentors and Alumnus Members

### ***From the Manager....***

Scholars and mentors have different responsibilities to fulfil before the end of the year with reporting and acquittal requirements. Letters outlining these have been sent to all scholars and mentors. If the RAMUS Team can be of assistance to you in fulfilling these responsibilities or if you have not received advice about your requirements, please let us know.

Scholar reports are the topical requirement at this time of year. The RAMUS Scheme requires an annual report from scholars. Reports address the content of learning plans i.e. what was achieved and how and what was not achieved and why, plus some qualitative feedback on experiences with your mentor. We have developed a template for you to use, if this is a help at this time of year. It is important that scholars fulfil the terms of their Scholar Agreement, develop rural connections to the practice and delivery of rural health services and meet their acquittal requirements.

We are delighted to announce that the 2005 Mentoring Awards are being awarded to Martin Altmann of Murray Bridge, South Australia and Peter Francis of Wodonga, NSW – see the nominations by each of the scholars they are mentoring on pages 3 and 4. We would also like to express immense gratitude to all of the rural medical practitioners who mentor RAMUS scholars. Your role in the Rural Doctor Mentor Program is imperative to the operation of the RAMUS Scheme. Any feedback from you about the mentor program, either through the report on your scholar or directly is most welcome. Many mentor reports are already coming in.

We expect about 117 RAMUS scholars to be graduating in 2005 – a wonderful result for the graduates themselves, their mentors and for us, having worked from a distance with the graduates for the duration of their scholarships. Those who received scholarships when the RAMUS Scheme first began in 2000 are among this year's graduates. This is a significant event for their mentors as well. Six years of generously supporting RAMUS scholars is widely appreciated by many. We are looking forward to continuing contact with all new graduates as RAMUS Alumni members.

Many thanks for contributing great photos and stories to this issue of the newsletter featuring RAMUS scholars around the country. Please keep sending more – on location with mentors during the summer break, group shots, articles and reflections.

Best wishes from all of the RAMUS Team for a peaceful and rewarding 2006.

*Margaret Ruhfus*  
Manager, RAMUS

### [In This Issue!!!](#)

**End of Year Reminders**

**2006 RAMUS Application Information**

**2005 RAMUS Mentoring Awards**

**Alumnus Ambassadors**

**Mentoring - A Partnership to Value**

**Scholars' Contributions**

### [In The Next Issue!!!](#)

**What is this thing called "Rural Medicine" by Sonia Purcell (ANU)**

**Julie Chan's Placement at Airlie Beach**

# RAMUS Acquittal Requirements

## CONTINUING SCHOLARS

**Due on 31 December 2005**

2006 Scholarship Agreement

2006 Recipient Details Form

2006 Confirmation of Enrolment

2005 Academic Results

2005 Mentor Report

2005 Scholar Report

2004/05 Income Tax Details

**Due on 30 March 2006**

Proof of Rural Health Club Membership

**Due on 1 June 2006**

2006 Learning Plan

## COMPLETING SCHOLARS

**Due on 31 December 2005**

2006 Completed Scholars' Database Form

2005 Academic Results

2005 Mentor Report

2005 Scholar Report

2004/05 Income Tax Details

Letters containing information on completing your acquittal requirements have been posted to you. Please contact a RAMUS staff member on 1800 460 440 or email [ramus@ruralhealth.org.au](mailto:ramus@ruralhealth.org.au) if you haven't received these documents and we will arrange for them to be sent as soon as possible.

For Continuing Scholars, please remember that your RAMUS payments for 2006 will only commence after we have received your acquittal requirements. Scholars who meet the due dates for the required documentation will receive their initial payment on the following dates:

### PLEASE NOTE

- 14 January 2006 for ongoing graduate scholars.
- 6 March 2006 for ongoing undergraduate scholars.



## APPLY FOR RAMUS NOW!

### The 2006 RAMUS Application Round is now OPEN!!!

The 2006 RAMUS Application and Guidelines are now available. Spread the word and notify others who may be interested in a RAMUS Scholarship. Tell them to visit [www.ruralhealth.org.au](http://www.ruralhealth.org.au) or contact the RAMUS team for more information.

Applications close on 31 January 2006, 5:00pm

## 2005 Mentoring Awards

### Congratulations to RAMUS mentors!

In appreciation of their highly valuable contributions as mentors we are pleased to present the 2005 Mentoring Awards to Martin Altmann of Murray Bridge, South Australia and Peter Francis of Wodonga, NSW.

Truly award winning, as you will see (below) Martin Altmann's practice has also been named the RACGP's National Best Practice of the Year 2005. Peter Francis has been a RAMUS mentor since the scheme began in 2000 and exemplifies the value of mentors in the foundation and development of the RAMUS Scheme.

### Dr Peter Francis



Peter has been there for me –whether I am in Sydney studying at university or in Albury/Wodonga (Victoria) at home – Peter guarantees that our time is maximised arranging or performing clinical work alongside him.

I first met Peter when I started working at his GP practice as a medical receptionist in Year 11. It was because of my experience at Federation Clinic and observing Peter and colleagues in action that I became inspired to study medicine and endeavour to become a rural GP just like him. The tireless hours Peter invests improving the clinic and caring for his patients on and off duty, left a lasting impression. He is a true exemplar of his profession.

As a second-year medical student, over the years Peter has fostered my interests and provided me with a diverse range of health care experiences in a rural setting. He has ensured I've always felt part of the team at Federation Clinic and this sense of belonging extends to the entire rural community as the organised field work has involved allied health, home visits, retirement villages, hospital and specialist encounters.

Peter has provided me with invaluable experiences and has always been generous and only too enthusiastic to share his time, despite my surprise and unplanned visits! His guidance and counsel have not only imparted profound clinical wisdoms but he has taught me so much about myself and important aspects of the management of a rural practice – from presentation, punctuality, respect and dignity for patients, confidentiality and the economics. All these elements help create a self-sustaining practice that can continue to provide high quality of care and service to their patients.

His benevolent character and trust in me have equipped me with an enduring personal confidence and an ideal model of what a GP should be. I am ever grateful for Peter's time and efforts and look forward to many years working and learning by his side. Thank you Peter!

Prepared by Rachelle Abouchedid  
University of New South Wales



## Dr Martin Altmann

My rural mentor, Dr Martin Altmann, first took me for work experience in year 12. It was over this week that I decided that medicine was for me, and after being lucky enough to be accepted into Monash University and receiving a RAMUS scholarship I have seen him on a quarterly basis. I have felt welcome on every visit, and from first year until the end of final year have been given the chance to see and do more challenging things, always with encouragement and good advice.

The visits have been a major inspiration for me to end up in rural practice. I have seen not only the highlights of working in the practice itself, the hospital, nursing home, and local Aboriginal Health Centre, but also the lifestyle which comes with country medicine.

I have been given the chance to sit in with him in clinic, assist in surgery and on the labour ward, and also to sit in with other GPs in the clinic, each of whom have a different style and a different Special Interest. This has given me a broad overview of the many opportunities there are in rural practice, and has me thinking what it would be that I would like to do as my Special Interest.

Dr Altmann is a leader not only in the clinic, but in the community. As a doctor he is compassionate, well respected, and as patients repeatedly tell me "a brilliant man". Within the town itself he is highly involved in local sporting clubs, church and school groups, and has gained the respect of people throughout the wider community. The practice itself is outstanding, and recently won RACGP's "National Best Practice of the Year 2005". Please refer to the following website: <http://www.racgp.org.au/document.asp?id=18356>

Dr Altmann has taught me how to deal with the highs and lows of practice, and how to communicate with people in a wide range of situations and social contexts.

The final of my visits in my undergraduate time was a 2-week rural medicine rotation which I chose to return to Murray Bridge to do. It was during this time that the invitation was offered to me to come back there to work in the future. This is something I am seriously considering, and can honestly say it is directly due to Dr Altmann's encouraging and nurturing influence over the past 6 years. I am really grateful to have had him as a mentor, and hope to continue to benefit from his wisdom in the future.

Please see the following website for photographs and information on Bridge Clinic.  
<http://www.bridgeclinic.com.au/title1.htm>

Prepared by Jo Hall  
Monash University



## Alumnus News: RAMUS ALUMNUS AMBASSADORS

We are very pleased to announce that 11 people are taking on a new role as RAMUS Alumnus ambassadors. This advisory group includes two scholar-mentor pairs. There are four former/completing scholars:

**Caroline McFarlane, graduated 2003, currently working in Geelong**  
**Anna Holwell, graduating from University of Melbourne**  
**Johanna Thomson, graduating from Monash University**  
**Jack Sloss, graduating from University of Queensland**

three current scholars:

**Francesca Arcidiacono, University of Queensland**  
**Robyn Silcock, University of NSW**  
**Philip Argy, University of Notre Dame**

three mentors:

**Alexis Tipping, Mackay, Queensland**  
**Peter Francis, Wodonga**  
**Mike Giltrap, Wodonga**

and National Rural Health Alliance Council Member, **Bek Ledingham**, NRHN, who is at Flinders University.

A series of teleconferences is planned leading to a face-to-face meeting in tandem with the 2007 National Rural Health Alliance conference in Albury. The group will discuss promoting RAMUS Alumni membership, maintaining contact with and sharing a variety of information from graduates with current scholars about postgraduate placement experiences and career choices through the RAMUS Alumni network. It will also advise on a project that we will be developing from mid-2006 to focus on the type of rural work that RAMUS scholars undertake following their postgraduate years, influencing factors and early career planning.

We look forward to introducing group members to you in 2006.

### **The Importance of Being 'A Local'**

**By Adele Zito**  
**RAMUS Scholar, 4<sup>th</sup> Year UTAS**

It may strike you as funny, but patients have an underlying desire to know where you live. This has become a common theme that I have noticed, during the past four years of visiting my mentor, Dr Annette Hackett, in Cygnet, Southern Tasmania. Almost without a doubt patients will ask me where I am from. Most assume that I come from the city. Some assume from interstate. And most begin with trying to explain what its like to live in a small rural community. Of course when I do finally get to explain where I live and grew up an unusual transition takes place. Suddenly no more explanation of rurality is required. The patients inevitably smile and give me a knowing look, which usually says 'you know where I am coming from'! This is then followed by, what a nice place Kettering is to live in. Do I live away from home to study? And how do I get to the hospital everyday?

*(continued on page 8)*

# Scholars at Play



From Left to Right

**1<sup>st</sup> Row: UNSW Scholars Mike McKeough, Andrew Thompson, Genevieve Lang and Crystal McKeough; Notre Dame Scholars Steven Grillet, Rose McDonnell and Phil Argy**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Row: Julie Chan (U Melbourne) and Jock Simpson (UNSW) at Airlie Beach; Joseph Turner (UQ) with TROHPIQ members; UNSW Scholars Kylie Alexander and Crystal McKeough (read an article written by Crystal on next page)**

**3<sup>rd</sup> Row: Brihoney Klason (Monash) with her baby Emily; UNSW Scholars Mike McKeough and David Campion; Paul Athanasiov (U Adelaide)**

## **Lasting Impressions**

**By Crystal McKeough  
RAMUS Scholar, UNSW**

**We are all told throughout our training that while we will forget the majority of cases we see, there are others that will stick with us for good. It was during a ride-a-long with the ambulance, in a regional centre, at the end of my first year, that a case made a lasting impression on me.**

**I left the house the morning of the ride-a-long excited that I would have the opportunity to see serious medical and surgical cases in the field, but by 3pm I was feeling increasingly let down. Instead of speeding from call to call saving lives, we had transported two elderly people from hospital to home and had cleaned the ambulance - hardly what I had expected from watching shows like 'ER'. However, shortly after 3pm, we got a call that a 50-year-old man was having chest pain on the outskirts of town after mowing the lawn. On arrival the man was sitting on the lawn, in no distress. He agreed to be taken to hospital for monitoring, despite the fact that his chest pain had subsided. I remember thinking at the time: "another uneventful call". I slumped into the back of the ambulance with the patient and an ambulance officer, while the patient's wife rode up front.**

**Five minutes into the journey, the patient complained of a recurrence of chest pain. The ambulance officer looked at me concerned and in that glance, the man arrested. In that final heart beat everything changed - the man went from pink to grey coloured and beads of sweat developed all over him; the ambulance hauled to a stop on the side of the highway as the paramedic that was driving raced around to assist with resuscitation, and the patient's wife started sobbing and screaming. There was no way for me to get out of the ambulance so I stood and watched as they shocked the patient multiple times and as they administered medication after medication. I adjusted oxygen gauges and held pipes in place on command. With one of my hands on the oxygen, and the other hand out the ambulance side door with the patient's wife holding onto it so tightly that the circulation stopped, I learned so many lessons. It may sound naive but that was the first time that I really realised the importance of the heart. I hadn't realised that if the heart stops, the person stops; instantly. Previously I had learned about the heart in first-aid, in anatomy and in biology but I hadn't understood the heart. Like most things in medicine it took the real-life experience to bring such an important lesson home.**

**We made it to the hospital with the man unstable, but alive. I don't know what happened beyond that - I don't know if he developed further complications or lived, or died. I don't even recall his name. What I do recall is: how the man deteriorated in an instant; how traumatic it was for his wife and how, the TV shows really need not show gunshot wounds and impalements to convey medical drama, because the realities of a simple heart attack are enough to keep you on the edge of your seat any day.**

**It's been nearly five years since that day but of all the patients I've seen that man's case is the one I can most clearly recall.**

# Scholars at Work



**From Left to Right**

**1<sup>st</sup> Row: Peter Kilby (UNSW) at Derby; Jacki Cowell at Weipa (JCU); Joseph Turner (UQ) with kids from the Gapuwiyak school**

**2<sup>nd</sup> Row: Jacki Cowell (JCU) and Dr Charles Ellis from the Royal Flying Doctors; Joseph Turner(UQ) at the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) National Rural Faculty Dinner; Catherine Henderson (UQ) at Numbalwar**

*(continued...)*



**It's a strange feeling, but I get the impression that these patients feel a proud sense, that their rural young adults want to come back and conduct their profession in areas, similar to where they grew up. I have found my experiences with these patients, really enjoyable and without a doubt I can always count on meeting some of the truly local characters, and through this I have come to realise that being a local medical student matters to these people!**

# Mentoring – a partnership to value

RAMUS scholars and mentors are collaborating across the country. Giving and receiving knowledge and wisdom and also promoting quality healthcare has direct benefits for the person being mentored as well as flow-on benefits for associated health care professionals. Mentoring is the way forward where many aspects of professional development can be explored.

Both the scholar and the mentor can consider:

**What is the primary focus of this partnership?**

**What are the key goals of this partnership and how will these be evaluated?**

**How will this partnership be accountable?**

Through a combination of face-to-face and distance communication a mentor can offer advice and guidance regarding developing:

**Learning Plans** - long-term goal setting and planning skills

**Profession / career focus** - interpersonal and communication skills

**Reflective practice skills**

**Emotional awareness**

As these RAMUS partnerships evolve, mentors are encouraging scholars to apply their skills in diverse situations.

## Etc.

***Beyond Borders- McGraw Hill's guide to health placements (\$19.95)*** by RAMUS scholar Hamish Graham, is a useful handbook for those going on placements in East Timor, Brunei, India and other overseas and remote Australian locations – published this year. It is also featured in this month's *Australian Rural Doctor*. Hamish is graduating from Monash University in 2005 as a doctor and author!

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Thank you to Alumnus members for sending back the latest surveys. We're receiving some great feedback that will be useful for new Alumnus members as they join and for continuing scholars. Your feedback is important. Please keep completing and sending back those yellow surveys by 16 December 2005.

2005 graduating scholars will be sent Alumnus membership packs early in the New Year

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Check out the new December issue of the *Australian Journal of Rural Health* – just out online