



Contents

From the RAMUS team

RAMUS Mentor Awards 2008

10th NRH Conference

Scholar achievements

**Rural high school visits -
highlights from 2008 scholar
reports**

Use your free access to AJRH

Conference reports

**Preparing your RAMUS
Scholar-Mentor plan – a guide
for new scholars**

**Former scholars as future
mentors**

Contacting RAMUS

Contributions to *Gone fishin'*
are welcome. Please send
contributions to
ramus@ruralhealth.org.au
The next issue will be
August 2009.

*The opinions expressed in Gone Fishin'
are those of the contributors and not
necessarily of the National Rural
Health Alliance or its individual
Member Bodies.*

From the RAMUS team

The RAMUS application round for 2009 is almost completed. More than 90 new scholars have commenced their scholarship this year and about 30 further scholarship offers are currently being finalised. We welcome all our new scholars and are looking forward to getting to know you. We also welcome rural doctors who have joined the Scheme as mentors.

In this issue of *Gone fishin'* we announce the winners of the RAMUS Mentor Awards for 2008: Drs Philip Green, Louis Peachey, Chistina Sasse and Nick Thies. Each has made and continues to make an outstanding contribution to the RAMUS Scheme.

The range of activities, experiences and achievements revealed by the scholars' reports for 2008 is staggering. Thank you to those scholars who included photos with your reports. Some of these photos are reproduced in this issue of *Gone fishin'*. You will also find a feature on rural high school visits based on extracts from selected 2008 scholar reports. In future newsletters we will feature other themes from scholar reports. The NRHA's *Partyline* newsletter for April 2009 also included a two-page spread of extracts from selected RAMUS scholars' reports.

The 10th National Rural Health Conference is being held in Cairns on 17-20 May 2009. Staff from the RAMUS team will be attending the Conference and we are looking forward to meeting current and former RAMUS scholars and mentors at the RAMUS lunch at the conference on Monday 18 May. We will also be available at the NRHA exhibition booth (Booths 4-6) during the conference.

Several RAMUS scholars will be attending the 10th NRH Conference with support from the RAMUS Conference Placement Program. The Placement Program is steadily becoming more popular. We have received many applications for support to attend the 10th NRH Conference and other conferences in first semester this year; many more applications than the available funds can support.

In late 2008 we asked all scholars who commenced their scholarship in 2008 and those completing in 2008 to take part in a survey covering their perceptions of RAMUS and their future training and career intentions. Thank you to everyone who responded; the response rate was excellent. A report on the survey has been prepared for the Department of Health and Ageing and we hope to provide a summary of the results in a future issue of *Gone fishin'*.

Our thanks to Samantha Johnson and Talitha Smallwood who worked with the RAMUS team during the very busy December-January period. Sam was also with us for a week in April.

We are here to support RAMUS scholars, mentors and alumni so please contact us if you have any questions about the Scholarship Scheme.

The RAMUS team
Susan, Carol and Janine

RAMUS Mentor Awards 2008

Four mentors have received RAMUS Mentor Awards for 2008: Dr Philip Green of Leschenault, WA; Dr Louis Peachey of Mt Isa, Qld; Dr Christina Sasse of Bendigo, Vic; and Dr Nick Thies of Warrnambool, Vic.

Dr Green was nominated by Bonnie Fergie (University of Western Australia, 6th year). In 2008 Bonnie spent fifth year of her medical studies at the Rural Clinical School in Bunbury, WA, and during the year she was able to spend a lot of time with Dr Green's practice. In her nomination Bonnie said:

'At his practice I was exposed to the fundamentals of general practice and learnt much of the lifestyle of a GP in a country town. I was inspired by Dr Green's commitment to his patients and his delivery of high quality medical care and teaching in a country area..... Dr Green is an inspiring doctor and teacher and I feel privileged to have had him as a mentor.'



Elaine Green, Bonnie Fergie, Philip Green (from left to right)

Dr Peachey was nominated by Hollie Berghofer, Phoebe Chidley and Emily Jacob (all in 5th year at James Cook University). In their nomination they described Dr Peachey as 'a wonderful soul who readily accepted all three of us as his RAMUS scholars in 2008.' They also said,

'As one of the few Indigenous Australian doctors in the country and with a rural background himself, Dr Peachey has a real feel for the issues surrounding rural, remote and Indigenous health..... Dr Peachey displays a fantastic teaching attitude and makes himself available as a mentor 24/7. He has a genuine concern for his students' wellbeing and education, and openly communicates this. We all believe that it would be incredibly difficult to find a better mentor for our personal, educational and professional development.'



Louis Peachy

Dr Sasse was nominated by Tahnee Dunlop (Monash University, 5th year), Alisha McCreery (University of Melbourne, 2nd year) and Jacqui Nash (Monash University, graduated 2004).

In nominating Dr Sasse, Tahnee said:

'Dr Christina Sasse ...has been a continuing source of encouragement and inspiration for me as a medical student.... Over the years, Chris has been very generous with her time. I have spent weeks in the clinic sitting in and observing her unique consulting style and receiving one on one teaching from her. She has been an invaluable asset to my medical education.... She is always full of encouragement and helpful tips and hints from her own experience.'

Alisha commented:

'I have a strong sense that when university gets tough, Chris will always be there to offer encouragement and reassurance....Watching Chris work provides a first class lesson in how to be adored by your patients. The rapport she has with them is obvious, and is unmistakably the result of the respect that she shows them, and the comprehensive and diligent care that she has provided over a number of years.'

Jacqui said:

'Chris Sasse was a wonderful mentor and support to me during my final two years of medical school. I found Chris to be an uplifting and inspirational person and doctor that I was fortunate enough to be able to spend time with during those years.'



Christina Sasse with Tahnee Dunlop

Dr Thies was nominated by Wendy Henderson (University of Tasmania, graduated 2008) who, during her medical degree, returned annually to Warrnambool for clinical placements with Dr Thies.



Nick Thies and colleagues Greg Pallas and Christian Fiedler (from left to right)

Wendy said, 'Nick's input into my medical training has been profound.... As my studies evolved he found me new and exciting experiences in Warrnambool to match.' She noted that:

'Nick, as an individual and a doctor, has been an inspiring person to work with.... He has an infectious curiosity about medicine and how the world works that makes him an excellent teacher.... [As a paediatrician] he has great patience and empathy with his little patients and their families, often going the 'extra mile' to ensure really comprehensive care. He has been instrumental in pioneering child health services in southwest Victoria for over 20 years.'

Congratulations to the RAMUS Mentor Awards winners for 2008. We are profoundly grateful to Drs Green, Peachey, Sasse and Thies and the hundreds of rural doctors who, as RAMUS mentors, give so much of their time, experience and expertise to support RAMUS scholars.

10th NRH Conference



The 10th National Rural Health (NRH) Conference is from 17 – 20 May in Cairns, QLD.

RAMUS Scholars, mentors and alumnus members are invited to attend the RAMUS lunch at the conference on Monday 18 May, 12:35pm. If you are attending the conference, please come and join us! RSVP (acceptances only) to ramus@ruralhealth.org.au



Photo by Matthew Jarvis, rural Tasmania

Scholar achievements

RAMUS scholars achieved great things during 2008 in their medical studies and rural activities.

Achievements varied from receiving academic and other awards, to publishing articles, to speaking at conferences. Here are just a few examples:

- Jared Watt's article 'Improving inpatient management of community-acquired pneumonia in remote northern Australia' was published in the December 2008 edition of the *Australian Journal of Rural Health*
- John Paul Favero won the surgical academic prize of Coffs Harbour clinical school and was able to go on placement at New York Hospital for Special Surgery
- Matthew Hansen won a University of NSW award for student most oriented to rural general practice
- Joshua Cowan was a speaker at the Alfred Deakin Lectures, received 2 Premiers Awards, Australian Students Prize, and was a semi-finalist in Rural Achiever Awards Victoria
- Matthew Van Zetten was a co-convenor of NURHC Launceston and a health club NRHSN rep
- Andrew Webster won the Westpac/RDAA Medical Student of the Year 2008
- Samantha Lupton was involved in setting up the University of Western Sydney RHUUWS rural health club scholarship
- Angela Fraser worked with a pharmacist to develop treatment protocols for TB and HIV patients and drug charts for adult wards during placement at a rural Kenyan hospital
- Matthew Schiller spoke on rural mental health at the NSW Farmers Association annual conference.
- Amy Camplin was on the interview panels for the John Flynn Placement Program and selections for Rural Clinical School of WA
- Nancy Merridew was the inaugural convenor of the University of Queensland United

Nations Millennium Development Goals (UNMDG) Project and also presented at an international conference in Virginia USA

- Lea Starck assisted in establishing the new NOMAD rural health club at Deakin University

In addition to the individuals mentioned above, many other RAMUS scholars were office bearers in their rural health club and helped to organise successful club events and activities.



Photo by Stanton Smith, FURHS Campfire forum

Rural high school visits - highlights from 2008 scholar reports

Scholars' annual reports cover a huge range of experiences, activities and achievements. RAMUS scholars are certainly doing their bit to encourage young people from rural areas to pursue study and careers in health. During 2008, many scholars visited rural high schools. Here are some highlights from some of their reports:

We travelled to Dalby, QLD and visited five high schools in the area. We not only discussed careers but shared how we had adjusted to city living after moving from a rural area. We also involved the kids in practical activities such as blood pressure measurement and plastering. *Casey Barnes (2nd year, Griffith University)*

In July I was invited to attend a careers conference aimed at secondary school students from Swan Hill and surrounding areas. During my address I was able to provide the students with a medical student's perspective of the study of medicine. The response of

the audience was excellent and I feel that I was especially equipped to assist them in their queries given that I originate from a rural area myself. I found the experience invaluable and intend to continue this contact with rural high school students throughout 2009. *Kristen Hardy (5th year, Monash University)*

[I] visited the local Charles Sturt University campus to discuss with science students the University of Sydney medical course, the GAMSAT and medicine in general....It was great to see other students of rural backgrounds heading towards medicine. *Mark Dennis (4th year, University of Sydney)*

I informally mentored/tutored several country students throughout the year. Two [were] from my home town, to whom I gave advice regarding university applications, moving away from home and accommodation options. *Madeline Honner (3rd year, Monash University)*

Being at the Rural Clinical School enabled me to give a talk at a local high school about teenage and boys' health issues. This experience opened my eyes even further because of the strong Indigenous population at the school and how further cultural divisions exist in rural areas. Initially, I felt out of my comfort zone because I was unaware of many of the experiences these young adolescents were talking to me about. More importantly it highlighted to me that we, as a nation, still have much to do regarding Indigenous health and as a subset of this, rural Indigenous health. *Pasquale Rositano (4th year, University of New South Wales)*

In the region I am from in Tasmania, local high schools only go until Year 10. To complete Years 11 and 12, students must either travel 90 minutes each way by bus, or move out of home at 16, which I did. This is obviously a huge undertaking, and not many students will continue past Year 10. I was able to talk to these students, as a person who has undergone this first big step, and talk to them about what they will experience and gain from continuing their schooling. We then talked about university, which usually necessitates another move, and what they needed to think about for this...I talked to some students who were not even sure which subjects they should be considering to attempt to enter Medicine. It was a fantastic feeling, to be able to share my own experiences into how to overcome these hurdles and pursue a goal that you may feel at the time to be unattainable. One big thing that came up was financial considerations, and it was great to be able to tell the

students about opportunities such as HECS, Youth Allowance, and, for those considering Medicine, RAMUS as well. This whole experience enabled me to remember how far I have come personally in the six and a half years since I left high school, and it was fantastic to feel that I had given some of the students the support I could have used at the time. *Eliza Preece (5th year, Monash University)*

I worked with a teacher from a high school in Mandurah to develop and present a series of talks on 'Relationships, sex and other stuff'. The focus of these talks was: what is a healthy and unhealthy relationship; an explanation of the ways people can be sexually intimate and the risks involved; the ups and downs of having a sexual relationship; sexually transmitted infections, their signs and treatment; and lastly contraception and the options available... It was a really great opportunity to put into practice what I have learnt ... in the past four years in Population and Preventative Health... After each of the talks I was bombarded by questions..... regarding oral contraceptives to "can you check the result of my pregnancy test in the toilets". It was an interesting exercise and the teachers were very appreciative to have someone talk about something a number of teachers had little experience of teaching and for some only a small amount of education on. *Rose McDonnell (4th year, Notre Dame University – Fremantle)*



Stephanie Wallwork at Devil's Marbles, NT

Use your free access to AJRH

RAMUS scholars can access current and back issues of the *Australian Journal of Rural Health (AJRH)* through the RAMUS webpage. Scholars will receive an email with instructions on how to access the *AJRH* later this month.

Published since 1992, the *AJRH* offers important research on Australian and international rural health practice.

Current issue



The current issue of *AJRH* has original articles on differences in statin prescribing in rural and urban Australia; health behaviours of young rural residents; and HIV issues arising from experience in northern India. There are short reports on factors influencing practice choices of Australian medical students and rehabilitation services. There is a review of the recently published *A Textbook of Rural Health* which is available on-line from the Australian Rural Health Education Network.

Virtual issues

Virtual issues are on-line only compilations of top articles published in previous issues. There are currently two virtual issues available on Indigenous health and mental health.



Stuart Ross 'saving' SimMan's life at Flinders University Rural Clinical School

Conference reports

In recent months, RAMUS scholars and alumni have attended a range of conferences with support from the RAMUS Conference Placement Program. Highlights from some of their reports are printed below. Go to the 'Conference Reports' webpage at www.ruralhealth.org.au for the complete reports.

Cradle to Grave Conference and AGM of the North Queensland Faculty RACGP, Townsville QLD, 13 – 14 September 2008

The conference kicked off with Dr Martin McNamara, a pain specialist, speaking on 'The Problem of Pain'.....The last elective session of the conference that I selected was on 'On-Call and the After Hours GP'; my hope that this would be a preparation for me if I decide to train as a GP came to fruition. Run by the Royal Flying Doctor Service, the session went through real RFDS cases, along with 'Red Flags' to be on the lookout for during phone triage.

Jessica Dornan (3rd year, James Cook University)

WONCA Asia Pacific Regional Conference, Melbourne VIC, 2 – 5 October 2008

The diverse academic program was overwhelming, with more choices, niches, people, places, diseases, issues, and ideas than I have ever been exposed to before, while being amongst 1400 doctors from

nearly 50 countries around the world was simply inspiring in itself..... [A] highlight for me was a workshop focusing on 'Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islanders Health: What Actually Works'.....The stories, history and experiences of each Aboriginal medical team were so different, yet each team was able to share positive accounts and invaluable lessons with the equally diverse audience.

Pasqualina Coffey (6th year, University of Melbourne)

Through interactive workshops covering topics relevant to GP registrars and senior medical students alike, I was able to explore perspectives and experiences on current regional intern positions and rural general practice training opportunities with colleagues who have already begun their registrar training. I expect that these insights will further help to guide my own training pathways after graduation.

Dayton Walker (4th year, Flinders University)

2008 School of Rural Health Research Conference: Chronic disease management in rural areas, Shepparton VIC, 15-16 October 2008

Attending this conference was a great experience. I was able to understand more about the context of health care in the wider community and [it] gave me insight into how the current system can be improved to benefit those in rural areas ...

Casey Barnes (2nd year, Griffith University)

The conference had a marvellous mix of presentations by people going that extra step in their chosen field to produce research that will hopefully have a positive impact on the lives of those in the country.

Andrew Aldous (6th year, University of Melbourne)

ACRRM 5th Scientific Forum and Rural Doctors Conference, Sydney NSW, 23 – 26 October 2008

The lectures, workshops, forums and social activities highlighted for me the wide range of future possibilities and diversity that exist in rural and remote health. This conference had a great academic program and was a great networking opportunity to meet others passionate about rural health.

Kirsten Van Wunnik (3rd year, University of Queensland)

My experience began on a high with an opening address titled 'Training for Rural and Remote Practice – Flexibility' by ... Dr. Anne Kleinitz. Anne spoke of her extensive rural and volunteer service with Medecins Sans Frontieres. Her presentation

illustrated... that there are flexible career pathways available that expose you to a diverse range of medical fields in different environments without being locked into one specialty field.

Ashleigh Sullivan (5th year, James Cook University)

Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Ophthalmologists 40th Annual Scientific Congress, Melbourne, 22-26 November 2008

I was able to attend the Hollows lecture on Aboriginal Eye Health by Professor Hugh Taylor and numerous lectures in the epidemiology section regarding Ophthalmology in central and Western Australia....I presented my research on cataract prevalence and risk factors in rural Sri Lanka, as well as the provision of cataract surgical services to the same region.... Attending and presenting my research at the conference helped me to achieve a position on the South Australian Ophthalmology Vocational Training Program.

Paul Athanasiov (RAMUS Alumnus)

Australasian Society for Psychiatric Research (ASPR) Conference, Newcastle NSW, 2 – 5 December 2008

The conference opened my eyes to the fact that research comes in all shapes and forms and is often about sharing knowledge gained from unique experiences. It was also encouraging as I realised that many rural doctors continue to conduct clinical research whilst living and working in rural and remote areas. ...My research focused on the issue of antipsychotic induced weight gain..... The talk was purely nerve racking, but I felt that in the end I spoke well and was given lots of encouragement by the chair of the session and other speakers.

Hannah Newall (4th year, University of New South Wales)

Improving the Delivery of Maternity Care: Sharing the Lessons Learnt Seminar, Perth WA, 26 – 27 February 2009

I was exposed to many different models of care from Australia and New Zealand, ranging from high risk to low risk models, cross cultural programs and perhaps most appropriately, a model of group practice that is currently having success in one Australian Aboriginal community. I came away having narrowed my vision for my future in rural and remote practice, feeling confident that my training will be supported in the environment I intend to work and this is encouraging in terms of my career choice.

Sally Crispe (3rd year, University of Notre Dame Fremantle)

Through the conference I gained insight into the delivery of safe, integrated, effective and appropriate care. With national and international speakers it was insightful to compare how maternity care varies globally. Multidisciplinary presentations highlighted the diversity in skills and the appropriateness of teamwork to optimise women's health.

Amanda Larke (6th year, University of Western Australia)



Photo by David Lean on visit to Launceston, TAS

Preparing your RAMUS Scholar-Mentor plan – a guide for new scholars

One of the RAMUS requirements is that scholars, with the help of their mentor, prepare an annual plan for rural activities. The annual plan is documented on the Scholar-Mentor plan form. New scholars should complete and submit their Scholar-Mentor plan within two months of being awarded a full scholarship.

To assist new scholars who are preparing a Scholar Mentor plan for the first time, we have put together a brief guide with suggestions and examples. Go to the 'Tips for new scholars' web page at www.ruralhealth.org.au to download the guide.



Danielle Volling-Geoghegan in Central Queensland Helicopter Rescue Service (CQ RESCUE) helicopter



The RAMUS team	
Susan Magnay	Manager
Carol Paice	Project Officer
Janine Snowie	Project Officer
Contacting us	
Toll Free	1800 460 440
Phone	02 6285 4660
Fax	02 6285 4670
Mail	RAMUS National Rural Health Alliance PO Box 280 DEAKIN WEST ACT 2600
Email	ramus@ruralhealth.org.au
Website	www.ruralhealth.org.au

Former scholars as future mentors

The RAMUS team is currently contacting former scholars who graduated in 2006 and earlier and who are members of the RAMUS Alumnus program to ask if they are interested in becoming RAMUS mentors from 2009. We are using their responses to establish a register of former scholars who are willing and available to be RAMUS mentors in the future.

Ideally, RAMUS mentors should be in PGY3 at least and be working and/or training in a rural, regional or remote location (RRMA 3-7).

The register will be used as a source of potential mentors for new and continuing scholars who ask the RAMUS team for help in finding a mentor. Following normal RAMUS practice, it will continue to be the responsibility of scholars to contact potential mentors and to negotiate arrangements with them.

To find out more please contact Susan at the RAMUS team.