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Contributions to *Gone fishin'* are welcome. Please send contributions to [ramus@ruralhealth.org.au](mailto:ramus@ruralhealth.org.au)

## From the RAMUS team

This is the final issue of *Gone fishin'* for 2009. We wish all RAMUS scholars, mentors and alumni the very best for the holiday season and the coming year.

We have recently sent all scholars details of the end-of-year requirements for the scholarship. For those continuing their scholarships in 2010, there are a number of requirements which must be met before scholarship payments can recommence in the new year. These are summarised on p.6 of the newsletter and full details are available on the Current Scholars page on the website.

Congratulations to the 148 scholars who are graduating and completing their scholarship this year. We hope you will maintain your contact with RAMUS by joining the Alumnus Program.

The call for nominations for the RAMUS Mentor Awards for 2009 is now open. See p.2 for details of how to nominate your mentor for an award.

RAMUS Manager, Susan Magnay, represented the National Rural Health Alliance at the recent ACRRM/RDAA Rural Medicine Australia 2009 Conference. The highlight was the opportunity to meet RAMUS scholars and mentors also attending the conference. The Alliance was delighted to host a breakfast at the conference for RAMUS scholars and mentors and others with an interest in the scholarship scheme.

The RAMUS Conference Placement Program has been very popular this year. More than 150 applications for support to attend selected conferences were received. The available funds allowed for 60 grants to be awarded. Conference reports are added to the website as they are received. In this issue we reproduce Rebekah Adams' report on the GP'09 Conference held in Perth in October. Bek is a former RAMUS scholar who will soon be starting the rural GP training program in Western Australia and she writes vividly about the academic program, the training organisations exhibiting at the conference, and the networking she was able to do.

The 2010 application round for RAMUS is now open. The closing date is 18 January 2010. Please encourage current and prospective medical students with a rural background to apply. RAMUS is a popular scholarship. The number of scholarship places is limited so not every eligible applicant can be successful. However, we do encourage those medical students who have a background in rural and regional Australia, who believe they have a financial need, and who have a commitment to practising in rural Australia in the future, to consider applying for the scholarship.

We have enjoyed supporting our RAMUS scholars, mentors and alumni during 2009 and we look forward to continuing to support you in 2010.

Susan, Carol and Janine  
(the RAMUS team)

## RAMUS Mentor Awards

### Nominate your mentor now for the 2009 RAMUS Mentor Awards.

The annual RAMUS Mentor Awards recognise and celebrate the important contribution that RAMUS mentors make to scholars' links to rural practice and to the RAMUS Scheme overall.

If your mentor has supported and inspired you in exceptional ways in 2009, please consider nominating him or her for the award.

To nominate a mentor, send a statement of up to 400 words outlining your reasons for the nomination and the contribution that the nominated mentor has made. Please include a photo of your mentor, or (even better) of yourself with your mentor, with your nomination.

Send your nomination by email to [ramus@ruralhealth.org.au](mailto:ramus@ruralhealth.org.au) by 7 December 2009.

The 2009 RAMUS Mentor Awards will be announced in early 2010. RAMUS Mentor Award winners receive a framed certificate and the winners will be announced in the RAMUS *Gone fishin'* newsletter and the NRHA's *Partyline* magazine.

## RAMUS scholars and mentors meet for a hearty breakfast

The recent Rural Medicine Australia 2009 Conference in Melbourne provided the opportunity for the National Rural Health Alliance (NRHA) to host a RAMUS breakfast. About 30 people attended including current and former RAMUS scholars and mentors and others with an interest in the RAMUS Scheme.



Scholars Andrew Brier and Sara Fraser at the RAMUS breakfast

Susan Magnay, RAMUS Manager at the NRHA, represented the Alliance. This was a great occasion for RAMUS scholars and mentors from all over Australia to meet one another.



Scholar Nicole Gryg and mentor Peter Stevens



**Mentors Alison Edwards and Jane Watt**

The breakfast was a great success and the Alliance hopes to host similar networking events at conferences in the future.

Our thanks to ACRRM and the RDAA, the conference organisers, for making the breakfast possible.

## 2010 RAMUS Application Round

Applications for RAMUS 2010 opened on 4 November 2009 and will close on 18 January 2010.

The 2010 RAMUS Application Form and Guidelines are available at [www.ruralhealth.org.au](http://www.ruralhealth.org.au)

Each year, the Australian Government reviews the application guidelines for RAMUS. As a result of this review, there have been three important changes to the Application Guidelines for 2010.

The classification scheme used to determine eligible rural locations for RAMUS has changed from RRMA to the ASGC Remoteness Areas (RA) classification. For the 2010 RAMUS application round eligible rural locations will be those identified as being within RA categories 2-5. Information on RA categories and an interactive map can be found at <http://www.doctorconnect.gov.au/internet/otd/Publishing.nsf/Content/RA-locator>

In the ranking of applications, the rural background selection criterion will use sliding increments to give a higher value to periods of time spent in more remote

locations and a lower value to periods of time spent in inner regional locations.

A new selection criterion of commitment to future rural practice has been added. Applicants' commitment to working in rural Australia in the future will be assessed on the basis of stated intention and demonstrated previous experience of and/or commitment to rural communities.

## Conference Placement Program

The Conference Placement Program for 2009 has closed and all the funds available for 2<sup>nd</sup> semester 2009 for support to attend conferences have now been allocated.

Early in 2010, we will email scholars and Alumni with a call for applications for the Conference Placement Program for 1<sup>st</sup> semester 2010.

Take a look at the most recent conference reports on the website at <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/ramuscpp/?IntContId=14754&IntCatId=35>

You will find reports on the RACGP GP'09 Conference, the 2009 Australasian Sexual Health Conference, the 2009 Rural Critical Care Conference and many others.

## We need your photos!



We would enjoy seeing your photos and they may feature in *Gone fishin'*

Please send any photos you want to share to [ramus@ruralhealth.org.au](mailto:ramus@ruralhealth.org.au)



Photo from RAMUS scholar Stanton Smith's 2008 Scholar report

## Conference report

**RACGP GP'09 Conference, Perth, 1-4 October 2009, by Rebekah (Bek) Adams**

After recently being accepted to the Rural GP training program in WA the opportunity to attend the Royal Australian College of General Practitioners (RACGP) conference seemed fabulous and I was lucky enough to be granted some money from the RAMUS Conference Placement Program, without which my attendance would not have been possible. Thank you to RAMUS firstly, for getting me through medical school in some tough financial times, and secondly, for your ongoing support in the 'black hole' of the junior doctor years.

With some roster rearrangement and childcare arrangements in place for my gorgeous 21-month-old Lucy, I was off to have a glimpse into my future life as a GP! I had hoped to meet some of my colleagues, get some ideas of training possibilities and consider the issues facing General Practitioners now and in the future.

One thing I had not expected to get from the conference was homework, however one plenary session had a list of 'books to read' after a wonderful presentation by Jane Gunn on the philosophy of being a doctor. She walked us through history and spoke of Galen and William Osler, quoting from some of her favourite books. She spoke of Osler's passion for teaching students at the bedside and insistence that doctors learnt by observing the natural history of disease. One hour into the conference and Professor Gunn had managed to articulate with the help of great doctors of history why I 'need' to be GP.

Working in the ED I get a glimpse of the patient story and send them off into the world for their GP to 'follow up'. I look forward to seeing the development of the story, getting to know the patient both in health and sickness. It was off to a roaring start!

Many presentations spoke of the challenges facing GPs today, including health reforms and a changing workforce. The question was raised whether or not the future of general practice was uncertain. What would become of GPs in the new world of primary care? Could we be replaced by nurse practitioners? The presentations were thought provoking and sparked many a conversation with the overwhelming feeling that GPs would need to produce a common voice and be involved in the reform to shape our future. Of course we also thought that the contribution of a GP was unique and irreplaceable.

I had my star-struck hero moment when I sat in the front row to hear some cautionary tales from Dr John Murtagh who has and will help me through many exams. He is a humble, gentle man who shared a small part of his wisdom with his audience. His sensible first-principles approach to his patients, as well as his focus on relationships and communication, is the embodiment of how I would like to practise and teach medicine in the future. I feel so privileged to have met him and heard him speak.

Between presentations the pavilion had some great stands which helped me to set about the networking and planning for my future. I excitedly met the ladies from the Royal Australian and New Zealand College of Obstetricians and Gynaecologists (RANZCOG) and discussed my desire to be a GP obstetrician who can do ultrasound and colposcopy in remote areas of the Top End. They had some fabulous information as to how to go about gaining these skills. Next stop the West Australian General Practice and Training (WAGPET) where I was excited to discover I could complete my diploma of obstetrics in Kalgoorlie after a PGPPP (Pre-vocational General Practice Placements Program) placement in GP/paediatrics. I met a few doctors from Kalgoorlie and exchanged details in the hope that I can take my family there soon for a sneak peek visit! This was an invaluable opportunity that made the entire conference well worth attending.

I also chatted to the National Rural Faculty of RACGP about the help available to practise procedural skills once I am a rural GP registrar. The Sexual Health stand elicited more excitement about

the future as I found out the opportunities to get more experience in sexual health. The RACGP stand was filled with goodies and great learning tools as they attempted to convince me the RACGP was the College for me.

I met the chair of the GP Registrars' Association and realised there was a network for me to join while I work away my hospital time.

As a student I was certain that I wanted to be a rural GP and was heavily involved in the vibrant rural health scene. I heard about the phenomenon of the 'black hole' following graduation and now I am living it. I work in a tertiary hospital in a capital city, not the context in which I see my future. This conference helped me reconnect to the passion for my future and helped me to realise that even though sometimes it is a trudge, I am on the path to the job of my dreams. It is the kind of energy you cannot get from the computer screen.

I must say it was the first conference I have attended that was not specifically rural/remote and I did miss the camaraderie and the multi disciplinary crowd of the NRHA/NRHSN. I met some fantastic people and soon sought out the bush folk there, but I was left with a distinct feeling that rural folk are great team players and are pioneers for a multi disciplinary approach and health care reform to achieve better health for all Australians! And that is great, because it is not too long before we (my husband is a nurse) can leave the big smoke and join the team again!

(Rebekah is a RAMUS alumnus who graduated from Flinders University in 2007 and is now based in WA.)

## Payment dates 2010

As outlined in our recent letter to continuing scholars, from 2010 the RAMUS payment dates will change from twice-monthly (on the 6<sup>th</sup> and the 21<sup>st</sup> of each month) to fortnightly, every Thursday.

- **Graduate Payment Schedule:** commencing 14 January, second payment on 21 January and fortnightly thereafter; first payment \$500, all other payments \$380.
- **Undergraduate Payment Schedule:** commencing 4 March; fortnightly, first payment \$550, all other payments \$450.

You should have received a RAMUS scholarship 2010 calendar, showing the 2010 payment dates, with our 16 October letter (contact the RAMUS team if you would like another).

## Want to change your payment schedule?

In October we sent an email to all scholars on the Undergraduate Payment Schedule giving them an option to change to the Graduate Payment schedule.

We recognise that the Graduate Payment Schedule may suit some scholars in undergraduate courses better, especially in their later years of study. Each year we consider requests on a case by case basis from scholars on the Undergraduate Payment Schedule to change to the Graduate Payment Schedule.

If you decide to change to the Graduate Payment Schedule you cannot then change back to the Undergraduate Payment Schedule at a later date.

To make a request to change to the Graduate Payment Schedule from January 2010, you must contact the RAMUS team before 31 December 2009 to discuss your particular situation.

## Looking for a mentor in 2010?

We now have a register of former RAMUS scholars who are available to be RAMUS mentors from 2010. These potential future mentors are practising in rural locations in all States and Territories except Tasmania and the ACT and all are keen to support a current RAMUS scholar as they were supported by their rural doctor mentor during their studies.

For any scholars who need to find a new mentor in 2010, the RAMUS team will be happy to search the register and give you the contact details of former scholars whom you can approach. Following normal RAMUS practice, scholars will be responsible for contacting potential mentors and negotiating arrangements with them.

When scholars graduate and complete their scholarship, they are invited to join the RAMUS Alumnus program and asked if they are interested in being a RAMUS mentor in the future. Former scholars are eligible to become mentors once they have commenced vocational training (usually PGY3) and are working in a rural or remote location.

## 2010 Acquittal requirements

All scholars should have already received their 2010 acquittal requirements in the mail. Please contact the RAMUS team if you haven't.

All pro formas and details of the requirements are also available on our website [www.ruralhealth.org.au](http://www.ruralhealth.org.au) – follow the links to 'Current Scholars'.

### Continuing Scholars

#### Due 31 December 2009

- Scholar Details Form 2010
- Scholar Agreement 2010
- Scholar Report 2009
- Academic results 2009
- Confirmation of enrolment 2010
- Income details 2008-09
- Mentor Report 2009

#### Due 30 April 2010

- Scholar–Mentor Plan 2010
- Please ensure you are a member of your university's rural health club

### Completing Scholars

#### Due 31 December 2009

- Completing Scholar Details Form
- Scholar Report 2009
- Academic results 2009
- Mentor Report 2009

## Mentor reports and payment claims for 2009

Thank you to all rural doctors who have mentored a RAMUS scholar in 2009.

Later in November we will be sending mentors the forms for them to submit their 2009 reports on their scholars and their payment claims.

We ask mentors to return completed reports and payment claims by 31 December 2009. Payment claims will be processed from early January 2010.

## Tips for your scholar report

Scholars' reports for 2009 are due at the end of the year. If you started your scholarship in 2009, this will be your first report for RAMUS.

Your annual scholar report is the opportunity for you to reflect on your experiences as a RAMUS scholar over the past year.

There is no set format for the report; you are free to use any style or approach you wish.

If you have any photos, such as from rural health club events, visits to your RAMUS mentor or other rural activities, please include them.

In preparing your report ask yourself questions such as:

- To what extent did I fulfil the goals I set in my 2009 RAMUS Scholar-Mentor Plan?
- What were the highlights of the year?
- What activities did I undertake with my mentor and rural health club?
- How has the relationship with my RAMUS mentor developed?
- What other experiences, for example, through my formal studies or clinical placements, have exposed me to rural practice?

- How has my understanding of and interest in working in a rural health setting developed this year?

We are always keen to learn about the academic and other achievements of scholars so don't forget to mention if you have received university awards or prizes, or have written an article or presented at a conference.

Your comments on your experience of the RAMUS Scheme during 2009 are very welcome.

Your report should be 500 - 1,000 words in length.

We prefer to receive scholar reports electronically as email attachments. There is a Scholar Report proforma on the RAMUS website. Go to [www.ruralhealth.org.au](http://www.ruralhealth.org.au) and follow the links to the RAMUS Current Scholars page to download the proforma. Alternatively, you can submit your report by mail or fax.

Your report, or extracts from it, may be published in the *Gone fishin'* newsletter, on the RAMUS website or in other National Rural Health Alliance publications. De-identified extracts from RAMUS scholar reports may also be used in reports on the Scheme to the Department of Health and Ageing.

## Scholar and mentor achievements

Congratulations to the following RAMUS scholars and mentors.

Dr David Atkinson, current mentor, won the General Practice Education and Training's Supervisor of the Year award.

Dr Peter O'Mara, current mentor, is the new President of the Australian Indigenous Doctors' Association.

Current scholar, Shannon Nott, received the Westpac RDAA Medical Student of the Year award.

Dr Pam Turnock, previous mentor, has received a Distinguished Service award from the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine.

## Australian Journal of Rural Health



Professor Tim Baker, Director of the Centre for Rural Emergency Medicine at Deakin University, argues in an editorial in the Dec 2009 issue of the *Australian Journal of Rural Health* that '...small rural emergency departments are not simply cut down large urban emergency departments'. Professor Baker's editorial highlights an article which reviews emergency department performance in a Victorian country town hospital. Other articles deal with psychological screening for rural cancer patients; osteoporosis in rural populations; and mental health issues arising from drought. There are also articles on workforce issues affecting medical and pharmacy recruitment.

RAMUS scholars can access current and back issues of the *AJRH* through the RAMUS Current Scholars webpage <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/scholarships/?IntContId=253&IntCatId=7>

Other *AJRH* resources are available through this link including virtual issues on Indigenous health and mental health. The virtual issues are on-line only compilations of top articles published in previous issues.

## The NRHA and health reform

The Federal Government is considering proposals from three major reviews into Australia's health system: from the National Health and Hospitals Reform Commission (NHHRC); the Preventive Health Task Force; and on development of a National Primary Health Care Strategy. What will the proposed changes mean for people living in rural and remote Australia?

At the National Rural Health Alliance's Health Reform webpage (<http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/reform/?IntCatId=42>) you will find a range of information relating to the current health reform agenda, including Health Reform Notes on some of the critical issues currently being considered by the Government.

The Alliance welcomes feedback, comments and suggestions from consumers, health practitioners and students. You can send your comments to [nrha@ruralhealth.org.au](mailto:nrha@ruralhealth.org.au)

You can now follow the NRHA on Twitter.

## Contact RAMUS



### The RAMUS team

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**The RAMUS team, from left to right: Susan Magnay, Janine Snowie and Carol Paice**

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.