



## Contents

### Mentor Awards 2009

### Changes to Youth Allowance

### Does RAMUS have your current contact details?

### Tips for new scholars: how to find a mentor

### Scholars and their mentors: highlights from scholar reports

### 11th National Rural Health Conference

### Conference Placement Program: applications now open for 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester 2010

### Australian Journal of Rural Health

### A Corrigin success story

### Scholar-Mentor plan reminder

### Tips for new scholars: how to complete your Scholar-Mentor Plan

### Contact RAMUS

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

## From the RAMUS team

Under a new funding agreement signed recently with the Department of Health and Ageing, the National Rural Health Alliance will continue to administer the RAMUS Scheme until June 2013. We are delighted to be continuing our involvement with RAMUS and are looking forward to supporting scholars, mentors and alumni over the next few years. Under the new agreement, the RAMUS Scheme now supports 573 scholarship holders.

The 2010 application round for RAMUS has been the biggest yet, with more than 680 applications submitted. So far, 108 medical students have commenced as RAMUS scholars, following the 2010 RAMUS application round. Offers to a further 66 applicants are in process.

The annual RAMUS Mentor Awards recognise outstanding and inspirational mentors. The three very worthy award winners for 2009 are Drs Natasha Pavlin, Ursula Russell and Rachel Hammond.

Continuing the mentoring theme, this issue of *Gone fishin'* includes extracts about mentors and mentoring from selected 2009 RAMUS scholars' reports. For new scholars there are also some hints on how to find a mentor and how to complete your Scholar-Mentor Plan.

It's now time to consider applying for a RAMUS Conference Placement Program (CPP) grant to support attending a conference relevant to rural health. The article on p5 gives more details. The list of eligible conferences for 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester 2010 and the CPP application form and guidelines are available on our website.

Welcome to all our new RAMUS scholars and mentors. Remember we are just a phone call or email away if you have any questions at all about the scholarship. There is also a lot of information on our website ([www.ruralhealth.org.au](http://www.ruralhealth.org.au) – follow the RAMUS Scholarships link).

Susan, Carol and Janine  
The RAMUS team

## Mentor Awards 2009

Three rural doctors have received RAMUS Mentor Awards for 2009 for the outstanding and inspirational support they have provided to RAMUS scholars: Dr Natasha Pavlin of Natimuk in Victoria; Dr Rachel Hammond of Kalgoorlie, Western Australia; and Dr Ursula Russell of Shepparton, Victoria.

Dr Natasha Pavlin was nominated by current scholar, David Corbet, who said:

'While [Dr Pavlin's] teaching skills have provided me with tangible clinical skills and developed my clinical reasoning, it is her involvement in and engagement with her community that have truly shown me the rewards of rural practice.... Without a doubt she has made a huge impact on my future career and I'm sure she will continue to inspire many other medical students, GP registrars and colleagues.'

Dr. Pavlin has a varied practice, including working as a GP in Horsham, at the local Aboriginal Medical Service, training GP registrars and undertaking her own research. Beyond her medical career she is intimately involved in the arts community in Natimuk.

Dr Pavlin has also mentored another RAMUS scholar, now graduated.



**Dr Natasha Pavlin, David Corbet and two other medical students in costume for a neighbour's fourth birthday party – Dr Pavlin is the back half of the cow!**

Dr Rachel Hammond was nominated by Michelle Harris who graduated in 2009. For each of the five years of her scholarship Michelle travelled to Kalgoorlie, stayed with Dr Hammond's family and spent time with her practice and at other places, such as the local hospital.

For Michelle's last official mentor-scholar visit to Kalgoorlie Dr Hammond arranged for Michelle to visit the hall of mines where she climbed down a 100 year old inactive 30m mine shaft; a unique opportunity to see and understand what it is that a miner does each day and what medical and health implications manifest from this harsh and unforgiving occupation. Dr Hammond also arranged for Michelle to spend a day in Kalgoorlie hospital assisting the local anaesthetist and the two of them went together to the Goldfields Esperance GP Network AGM and dinner.

In her nomination Michelle said:

'I feel that Rachel is a very deserving candidate for this award, for her efforts as mentor have been outstanding and above the call of duty. I feel really lucky to have Rachel as my mentor because she has taught me much, been insightful of my needs, and given me great advice over the last five years, particularly with respect to coping with study, medicine and balancing family life. The greatest and most unexpected reward, however, was that we have developed a life-long friendship.'

Dr Hammond continues her involvement with RAMUS as mentor to another current scholar.



**Dr Rachel Hammond and Dr Michelle Harris**

Dr Ursula Russell was nominated by current scholar, Maree de Jong.

In 2008 and 2009 Maree was based at the Rural Clinical School in Shepparton in Victoria, and Dr Russell was her RAMUS mentor during this time.

Dr. Russell and her husband initially moved to Shepparton to complete their internship, and with a passion for the sunshine and the community, never left.

Maree said of Dr Russell:

‘... I have been very fortunate to be involved with such a great role model. It has been incredibly inspiring to see the care and dedication she puts into her role as a GP in such a diverse community.’

‘She has known and treated many of her patients for many years and treats them in the context of their family and community settings with a level of compassion and respect to a degree that I have rarely seen in other doctors. Her positive outlook and individualised model of practising has been valuable to experience and take part in. I feel extremely honoured to have gained such insight into the satisfaction that can be gained by practising medicine in such a way that not only addresses debilitating medical conditions, but also enriches her patients’ quality of life.’

Dr Russell has been a RAMUS mentor continuously since the Scheme began in 2000. She has mentored four RAMUS scholars who have now graduated and continues to mentor Maree and another current RAMUS scholar.



Maree de Jong and Dr Ursula Russell

## Changes to Youth Allowance

Many *Gone fishin'* readers will know that the government has recently introduced some changes to Youth Allowance and other student income support payments provided by Centrelink. One of the changes is that \$6,762 of 'Exempt Equity and Merit Based Scholarships' are exempt from the personal income test when Centrelink is assessing the level of income support entitlement.

The Department of Health and Ageing has confirmed with Centrelink that the RAMUS scholarship indeed qualifies as an equity and merit scholarship for the purposes of being exempt from the personal income test up to the amount of \$6,762.00.

Centrelink has also advised that the exempt amount is applied to the combined total of all equity and merit scholarships held by a student at a given time. Therefore a student who holds more than one equity and merit scholarship has the exempt amount applied to the combined total rather than to each scholarship. For example: 1 x RAMUS @ \$10,000 and 1 another scholarship @ \$5,000 will have the exempt amount applied to the total of \$15,000. In addition, the exempt amount of \$6,762 is indexed each year in line with CPI.

If you are receiving or applying for Youth Allowance or other student income support from Centrelink you should let them know that you are a RAMUS scholar. We are happy to provide you with a letter to take to Centrelink, confirming that you are a RAMUS scholarship holder and giving details about the scholarship payments and the nature and purpose of RAMUS. Simply contact us by phone or email if you would like such a letter.

### Does RAMUS have your current contact details?

Please contact the RAMUS team straight away if your address or other contact details change or if there are any changes to your university enrolment or status.

## Tips for new scholars: how to find a mentor

Finding a mentor for RAMUS is not as daunting as it might sound. You just need to remember a few basic points.

Your mentor should be a medical practitioner currently practising in a defined rural or remote location; that is, RA categories 2-5 as defined by the ASGC Remoteness Areas (RA) classification.

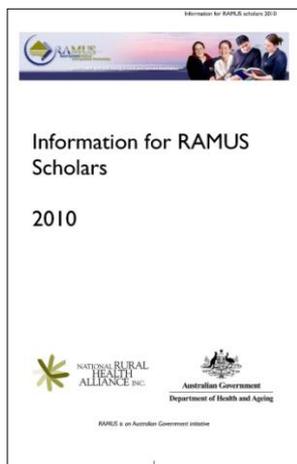
We suggest that you approach a doctor from your home district or a rural doctor with whom you already have a mentoring relationship or with whom you undertake rural placements. It is preferable that your RAMUS mentor is not a family member.

The ideal mentor is an experienced rural doctor (not necessarily a GP) who gives you support and advice and who can facilitate opportunities for you to experience and learn about rural medicine and rural communities.

Your RAMUS mentor will be asked to assist you to prepare an annual Scholar-Mentor Plan and to submit a brief report at the end of each year on the contact they have had with you. RAMUS mentors receive an annual fee of \$300 for each scholar they mentor.

As a new scholar, you should select your mentor and send his/her contact details to the RAMUS team within two months of being awarded a full scholarship. If you are having difficulty in arranging a mentor, the RAMUS team will be happy to help.

For more information about finding a mentor, have a look at 'Information for new RAMUS scholars 2010' available online at [www.ruralhealth.org.au](http://www.ruralhealth.org.au) and follow the RAMUS links to 'Tips for new scholars'.



## Scholars and their mentors: highlights from scholar reports

RAMUS scholars had some very positive experiences participating in the mentor program during 2009. Here are some highlights:

The greatest gift my mentor gave me during my time as a RAMUS scholar was when he told me his story so far: how he had got to where he was, and how I had happened upon him at an exciting time. He was expanding his practice; he had developed a keen interest in tropical medicine and travel medicine. On top of all that, he felt that for the first time in his professional life, he was getting close to a work-life balance. He demonstrated to me that the choice to 'go rural' doesn't leave you stagnant and de-skilled. It allows you to develop and improve yourself as a clinician and as a person. *Sarah Brew (Completed 2009, Monash University)*



**Previous RAMUS scholar Antoinette Mowbray (completed 2009) and her mentor Dr Patrick Kinsella**

Understanding my end of phase exams were coming up he [Kate's mentor] took the opportunity to talk to some of his regular patients and organised for patients with differing signs and symptoms to come in so I could get a good exposure to different types of patients, some of which I won't have the opportunity to see in hospital wards during my university clinical attachments. *Kate Glawson (5<sup>th</sup> year, UNSW)*

I may have finished my degree, but I have developed a great friendship with my mentor and her family that will last a lifetime. It is fortunate that we both have children of similar ages and a lot in common. We will

probably see more of each other and contact each other more now than before I entered into the RAMUS mentor program. I have really enjoyed the mentor program, and would not change a thing about it. It has been a privilege to have been involved in it. I hope that in the future I may be able to do the same for another student. *Michelle Harris (Completed 2009, UWA)*

The rural mentor aspect of the scholarship I have particularly enjoyed and I feel that it is truly one of the greatest strengths of the scholarship. My mentor is an emergency consultant at my local hospital, which has given me the amazing experience of being able to join him for a number of shifts during my semester breaks. It was a truly eye opening experience and confirmed my wish to be a doctor. *Emma Jones (2<sup>nd</sup> year, UWA)*

It was important to have constant input from my mentor over the last four years. In no other setting do you have the chance to be evaluated by the same person for such a length of time and I valued his comments about how much I had grown in confidence with patients and as a student. The mentor initiative was by far the best part of the RAMUS scholarship. *Andrew Bullen (Completed 2009, University of Queensland)*



**RAMUS scholar Danny Pinjuh and his mentor Dr Dennis Pashen**

## 11th National Rural Health Conference

Perth Convention Centre  
13-16 March 2011

If you care about the health and wellbeing of people in rural and remote Australia, put the dates in your diary. Whatever your involvement, whichever your discipline, we want the conference to be useful for you. Let us know what topics should be dealt with, who you'd like to hear from. Better still, plan to make a presentation yourself.



Watch the National Rural Health Alliance's website [www.ruralhealth.org.au](http://www.ruralhealth.org.au) for the Call for Abstracts (opening soon) and for program details.

## Conference Placement Program: applications now open for 2<sup>nd</sup> Semester 2010

Under the RAMUS Conference Placement Program (CPP) current RAMUS scholars and former scholars who are member of the RAMUS Alumnus can apply for grants of up to \$1500 to attend selected conferences in Australia. Eligible CPP conferences must have a rural and remote health context or must enhance clinical skills in rural practice.

The list of eligible conferences for 1 July – 31 December 2010 is now available.

There are some exciting sounding conferences coming up in the second half of the year: the National University Rural Health Conference (NURHC) in Alice Springs in July; GP 10 in October; the RDAA/ACRRM Rural Medicine Australia Conference also in October; and conferences on maternity care, anaesthetics, burns, ophthalmology, emergency medicine and much more.

Go to [www.ruralhealth.org.au](http://www.ruralhealth.org.au) and follow the RAMUS links to the 'Conference Placement' page for the list

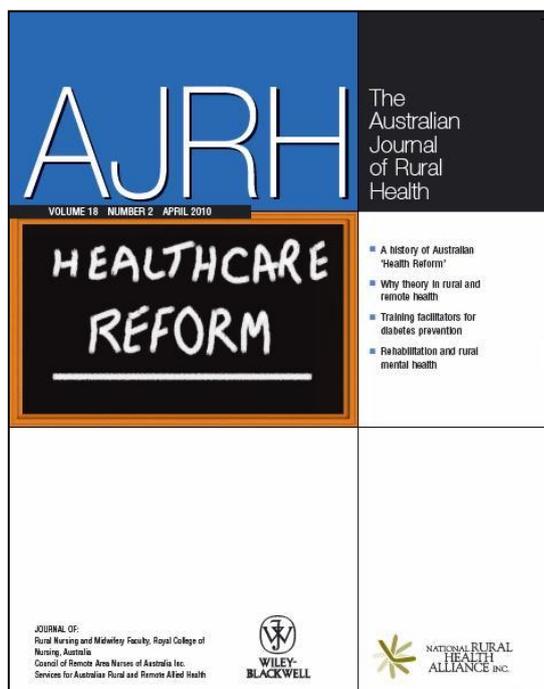
of conferences and the application form and guidelines.

Please note the due dates for applications on the list of eligible conferences. Because of the need to assess applications and inform applicants of the outcome in good time before each conference, the due dates will be strictly observed and late application will not be able to be accepted.

For conferences being held in July 2010, the closing date for applications is **24 May 2010**. Eligible conferences in July include:

- Breathing New Life into Maternity Care (Alice Springs, 1-3 July)
- AMSA Global Health Conference (Hobart, 1-4 July);
- Australian and New Zealand College of Anaesthetists Rural SIG Conference (Hamilton Island, 4-6 July);
- NURHC (Alice Springs, 15-17 July); and
- 1<sup>st</sup> International Youth Mental Health Conference (Melbourne, 29-30 July).

## Australian Journal of Rural Health



Health reform is a major focus of the most recent issue of *Australia Journal of Rural Health* (AJRH). The editorial by NRHA Executive Director, Gordon Gregory, sets the context for the current reform

agenda and argues for the needs of rural and remote communities. A policy review article outlines the recent history of health reform in Australia.

Other articles examine diabetes educator training and urban rural differences in psychiatric rehabilitation outcomes. There is an evaluation of a Broken Hill based service for mobile screening of abdominal aortic aneurysm and a review of the availability of antidotes for the treatment of acute poisoning in Queensland public hospitals. Another article provides key reasons why rural and remote health is in need of theoretical development and how theoretical approaches would benefit rural and remote health.

Short reports cover a rural birth index; the use of PDAs as a tool to improve access to clinical information and learning; and factors to consider in establishing a videoconference medical oncology outreach clinic.

RAMUS scholars can access current and back issues of the AJRH, including virtual issues which are online compilations of top articles published in previous issues, on Indigenous and mental health through [www.ruralhealth.org.au](http://www.ruralhealth.org.au) and by following the RAMUS links to 'Current Scholars'. You will be prompted to enter a password. We will email all scholars passwords within the next week.

## A Corrigin success story

Julie Ling, editor of *The Corrigin Windmill* newspaper, wrote about three RAMUS scholars (now completed), all locals from Corrigin, a small town in Western Australia, about 250km west of Perth on 30 November 2009. With permission from the *Corrigin Windmill*, an edited version of the article is below.

There are rare moments to be treasured when you hear some really wonderful news: news that makes you happy and excited and, even less frequently, proud. Just such a moment occurred for me this week when I learnt that three young women from Corrigin have completed their six year course to become a medical doctor. What are the odds that, in any other rural town of this size, three students would graduate at the same time as doctors? I reckon the odds are too difficult to calculate.

It has been a long and demanding road for these women, neither of whom went directly into medicine but studied in other disciplines first. They have all given up a lot of the traditional “freedoms” of a young person’s life in order to achieve their goal: few parties, little socialising and a limited circle of friends generally restricted to other students in their course or others also studying and therefore understanding of the demands that entails.

So who are these young women?

**Dr Joanne Baker:** a graduand of the second intake of medical students at Notre Dame. Joanne had already completed a degree at another university before entering medicine and is simultaneously deeply involved in a research program. Notre Dame values this research so highly they are actively seeking additional funding for her to complete it and facilitating the work being published, potentially making her one of the youngest published medical researchers in the country. Joanne will commence her internship at Sir Charles Gairdner Hospital in January, a position she achieved because she has not failed in any unit or assignment during the course. Congratulations Joanne.

**Dr Keira Baker:** a graduand of the 50<sup>th</sup> intake of medical students at U.W.A. Keira is a typical country girl... who has become “citized”, but retains a love of the country and plans, at this stage, to pursue a career in rural medicine on completion of her internship at Royal Perth Hospital. R.P.H. was Keira’s first choice for her position commencing in January as she looks forward to the challenge of the great variety of work she will face in such a large teaching hospital. She completed her country rotation (the three month period medical students must spend in a large rural hospital) in Kalgoorlie and recognised the need for rural doctors to have a wide area of expertise. Congratulations Keira.

**Dr Amanda Larke:** a graduand of the 50<sup>th</sup> intake of medical students at U.W.A. Amanda is also completing her internship at R.P.H. to enjoy the greater variety of experiences such a large hospital can offer, with some specialised areas that are not readily available elsewhere. Amanda married in December 2008 and spent her honeymoon working in a hospital in Nepal accompanied by her very supportive husband! As her medical status has been achieved under her maiden name, she will retain it as her professional title. Amanda has never been one to take the obvious or simple path and we can be

assured that her plans post internship will be neither obvious nor simple! Congratulations Amanda.

It may seem odd that I take such a delight in the girls’ success: they are not related to me, I never taught them, and I never had a lot to do with them. This is a celebration of hard won achievement by three girls who spent their formative years in this community and attended our local primary school. They played tennis, swam and had good times with many other of the other young people in Corrigan and there will be others, beside their proud parents and grandparents, who will equally be delighted by their success. Hats off to their teachers, friends and families who have supported them in their quest for success.

\*Students are “graduands” when they have completed the course successfully and graduate after their degree has been conferred.

(*Corrigan Windmill*, 30 November 2009)

### **RAMUS update: Where are they now?**

**Jo Baker** told us that, ‘so far [my] internship is going well! I have completed a rotation in General Medicine and have just started a rotation in Orthopaedics. I have been offered a research fellowship with PHC RED (Primary Health Care Research, Evaluation and Development) Strategy.’

Jo is hoping to complete and publish research on patients’ perception of barriers to discussing and testing for sexually transmitted diseases in General Practice. She is also currently interested in specialising in Rural General Practice and hoping to participate in the PGPPP next year, which offers rotations in rural general practice.

**Keira Baker** is currently working in Emergency at Royal Perth Hospital. She said that, ‘[work] is going really well, although the shifts have been pretty tricky to get used to!’ She also mentioned that, ‘[it is] very different to being a student and learning all the time.’

**Amanda Larke** is currently an intern at Royal Perth Hospital in the general medical unit and she is ‘loving her internship’. Up to now, gastroenterology and doing procedures have been favourites. She is looking forward to doing an ED rotation from Christmas/New Year. Looking ahead, Amanda wants to become an obstetrician and would like to spend some time working in the north of Western Australia.

## Scholar-Mentor plan reminder

**For continuing scholars** your Scholar-Mentor Plan was due on 30 April 2010. If you haven't already done so, please send your completed plan to the RAMUS team as soon as possible.

**For new scholars in 2010** your scholar-mentor plan is due 2 months after you were awarded a full RAMUS scholarship.

## Tips for new scholars: how to complete your Scholar-Mentor Plan

The RAMUS annual planning tool provides a framework for your relationship with your mentor and for your exposure to rural practice and rural life over the years of your scholarship. It may also help you with longer term decisions about your career in rural health.

When preparing your plan talk it over with your mentor. Use your mentor's wealth of knowledge and experience to plan activities and goals that will be satisfying, achievable, realistic and relevant to your stage of study and your career aspirations.

Have a look at 'A guide to preparing your scholar-mentor plan' available online at [www.ruralhealth.org.au](http://www.ruralhealth.org.au) and follow the RAMUS links to 'Tips for new scholars'.

## Contact RAMUS



### 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](mailto:ramus@ruralhealth.org.au)

**Website** [www.ruralhealth.org.au](http://www.ruralhealth.org.au)

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.