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The opinions expressed in the RAMUS Newsletter are those of the contributors and not necessarily of the National Rural Health Alliance or its individual Member Bodies.

From the RAMUS team

Congratulations and welcome to the 110 medical students who have started their scholarship this year. We would also like to extend a warm welcome to those rural doctors who have recently joined the Scheme as mentors. The 2012 application round is still underway and about 38 scholarship offers are in process.

For those scholars continuing this year, we hope you had an enjoyable break and a happy return to your studies in 2012. For those of you continuing in your role as RAMUS mentors 2012, we thank you for your continued commitment and invaluable contribution to the Scheme.

We are delighted to announce that Dr Jenny Wray and Dr Olga Ward are the 2011 RAMUS Mentors of the Year; they have received the awards for their outstanding support for RAMUS and the scholars they mentor. Turn to Page 2 for profiles of Dr Wray and Dr Ward.

Thank you to those scholars and alumni whose reports and photos are included in the Newsletter. We hope these might inspire others to contribute to future issues. This issue features Angus Hardy's reflections on his first year as a medical student and RAMUS scholar; extracts from several scholars' reports on their visits to rural high schools in 2011 and Brooke Ah Shay's photos from her placement with the RFDS in Port Hedland as a result of receiving the ACRRM President's Prize for 2011.

To help new scholars get the most out of their scholarship, we have features on finding a mentor, preparing your Scholar-Mentor Plan, the Conference Placement Program and rural health clubs.

Congratulations to RAMUS Project Officer, Lesley Crompton, and her husband, Michael, on the birth of their beautiful son Dominic on 13 February. In December we welcomed Dane Morling to the RAMUS team. Dane is working in Lesley's position while she is on maternity leave.

The RAMUS team currently consists of Susan (Manager), Dane (Project Officer) and Janine (Project Officer). We are here to assist you so please contact us if you have any questions about your scholarship or the RAMUS Scheme in general. You will find our contact details on Page 9.

RAMUS Mentor Awards 2011

Many scholars say that the opportunity to be mentored by a rural medical practitioner is a highlight and one of the most rewarding parts of being a RAMUS scholar.

Dr Olga Ward and Dr Jenny Wray have received 2011 RAMUS Mentor Awards in recognition of their outstanding contribution to the Scheme and the inspirational support they have provided to RAMUS scholars.

Based in Perth, Dr Olga Ward works with the Royal Flying Doctor Service, regularly flying her much loved plane 'Pinky' to rural towns in Western Australia. She has participated in the RAMUS Scheme as a mentor since 2004. She was nominated by RAMUS scholar Henry Maddock, a third year student at University of WA.



Dr Olga Ward and 'Pinky', her 44-year-old plane

Henry has known Dr Ward since he was seven years old. In his nomination Henry said:

'Dr Ward has built an exceptional rapport with her patients and receives a huge demand for appointments. I was impressed by her warm and friendly nature and professional approach to her patients. It was obvious that each one left feeling more than satisfied with the appointment, not only because of the medical care she provides but the genuine compassion she has for rural patients. It is this additional effort and care, above and beyond her job description, that I find inspirational.'

'As a teacher, she is extremely interactive and constantly educates me at every opportunity. Olga deserves this award because she epitomises the RAMUS spirit and should be recognised for her achievements.'



Westonia Airstrip where Dr Ward does a clinic near Henry's home

Henry was invited to take part in an episode of the Rural Health West's Rural Doctors' Broadcasts titled 'Farmer's Health'. Henry flew with Dr Ward in her plane to Narembeen to discuss the hazards and common health problems that farmers typically encounter. The episode aimed to raise awareness of rural health to students and doctors, encouraging them to return to the country. The episode can be viewed at:

<http://www.ruralhealthwest.com.au/go/education/rural-doctors-broadcasts/may-2011-farmer-s-health>

Dr Jenny Wray, of Narooma NSW, was nominated for the award by Emily Deck, who graduated from UNSW in 2011, and Elizabeth Downie, a current scholar in 5th year at UNSW. Dr Wray has participated in the RAMUS Scheme since 2005.

Dr Wray and her husband Jock Munro award at least one scholarship each year to students graduating from Narooma High School, making tertiary education more achievable for local young people. Both Emily and Elizabeth have benefited from this scholarship.



Dr Jenny Wray

In her nomination, Emily said:

'I respect Dr Jenny Wray as a practitioner and as a person, and greatly admire the work she does in our local community. She fulfils so many roles with aplomb - being a rural GP, raising a family, and running and coordinating a large and busy general practice. I aspire to do at least some of what Jen does with as much efficiency, enthusiasm and to such a high a standard.'

'I have so much admiration and respect for all the work she does in our community and for rural healthcare. Being awarded the RACGP GP of the Year in 2011 and the practice being recognised as the RACGP NSW General Practice of the Year is a wonderful testament to the work she and her team do. She has played a huge part in shaping my medical education to date.'

Elizabeth said:

'Dr Wray provides excellent support and amazing opportunities to the medical students at her practice. Whilst supporting ANU medical students on rotation, Dr Wray also mentors several RAMUS scholars, and allows them to play a role in her practice. She is highly committed to and enjoys getting personally and professionally involved in the communities in which she lives and works. She is a kind and generous woman, a great doctor, an enthusiastic supporter of future medical practitioners, and an active member in our community. Her continuing support has proven invaluable.'

We will call for nominations for the 2012 RAMUS Mentor Awards in October 2012.

RAMUS website

Find documents and forms and keep up to date with RAMUS at:

<http://ramus.ruralhealth.org.au>

Finding 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 your 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 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. In particular, we maintain a register of former scholars who are available to be RAMUS mentors. If you like the idea of having a former RAMUS scholar as a mentor please contact the RAMUS team.

For more information about finding a mentor, have a look at the *Information for new RAMUS scholars 2012* booklet available at:

<http://ramus.ruralhealth.org.au/tips>

Rural high school visits: extracts from 2011 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 2011, many scholars visited rural high schools. Here are some examples from 2011 scholars' reports:

Activities that I've been involved with here in Broken Hill include educational programs for school students that promote choosing health as a career choice, but also to educate them about healthy lifestyle choices and first aid. They have been very wonderful and rewarding experiences, and it's always fun to see the children down the street who remember me from teaching them about blood pressure or CPR.

Rhys Harding (4th year, Wollongong University)

This year I also conducted a few high school visits as part of my role as a member of the sub-committee for my university's rural health club. It was great to go out and meet rural teenagers who are interested in health as a profession and to be instrumental in inspiring them to aim high.

Kyla Garft (3rd year, Monash University)

Each year the AMA WA and the Dr YES program organise trips to high schools in rural areas of Western Australia so that medical students from UWA can talk to the students about the key areas of health affecting their age group. This includes sexual health, mental health, and alcohol and drug use. This year I was one of the coordinators of the Dr YES program and organised a week-long trip for ten of our volunteers to go up to the Pilbara visiting Port Hedland, Tom Price and Newman.

Christopher Lim (3rd year, University of WA)

I have been able to attend career exhibitions and field days, and run teaching sessions for visiting work experience students throughout the year. I was fortunate to man a stall at the local schools career exhibition in Griffith, NSW, and even met some students from my former school. I hope that my background in this region and positive outlook for rural health encouraged them to consider health careers and to overcome apprehensions about relocating for tertiary training.

Josh Price (2011 graduate of UNSW)

During 2nd semester I participated in a rural high school visit through the Rural Health Club (RHINO). This was a four day trip south of Townsville where six of us from the club went around visiting rural high schools in the area telling them about the various career paths that can be taken in rural health. With each school we did a fifteen minute presentation on all the different types of health care workers there are, as well as giving them a general idea of how to prepare for university life and what to expect from it. After this we set up various stations such as taking blood pressures, making casts for broken arms, tendon hammers etc, which the students rotated through. The students seemed to enjoy the visits very much and many showed a genuine interest in rural health.

Sam Turner (3rd year, JCU)



Sam Turner presents on life as a university student

With the pathology museum at the university, I volunteered as a tour guide, leading visiting high school groups from both city and country through the amazing collection of diseased organ specimens. This was a great way to test my own medical science knowledge and encourage the students I met to aspire to the career of their dreams.

Megan Thompson (5th year, UNSW)

One of the most enjoyable weekends in second semester was the rural high school visits. I and four other students visited high schools south of Townsville in the towns of Mirani, Glendon and Sarina and spoke to students about considering a career in healthcare and explaining the benefits of rural health, including the RAMUS scholarship.

Simon Baker-Jones (3rd year, JCU)



Simon Baker Jones' blood pressure is taken by a student

I and another 4th year student visited a local high school and spoke to a group of 15 and 16 year old girls, focusing on sex education and empowering girls to make good decisions, which was a really great experience.

Emma Beddows (5th year, UTAS)

My first year of medicine

by Angus Hardy



Angus Hardy

Angus was awarded a RAMUS in 2011 as a first year medical student at University of New England. Here is an edited version of his 2011 scholar report in which he writes about his experiences as a RAMUS scholar in 2011 and what these mean for his future career plans.

My first year of medicine has been a very eventful one, full of new friends, new experiences and a whole lot of new knowledge. This year would not have been possible without the support from my scholarship.

My mentor and I have known each other for many years, with our two families belonging to the same small rural community. Hence when we sat down to discuss our mentor plan, rural health was obviously the foremost subject. We decided that I would spend time with Dr Appleton in his practice, as well as other rural GPs, join my local health club at the University of New England and talk to local schools about rural health.

In July this year I spent a day with Dr Appleton in his sole General Practice at Bellbrook NSW. After just completing my first semester of medicine I was very apprehensive and excited about experiencing 'real life practice'. Throughout the day I quickly learnt lots about rural medicine including the importance of understanding the general demographics of the area. Dr Appleton also showed me around his clinic explaining how samples were sent to pathology and showed me his own sterilisation unit that he described as 'crucial' due to his isolation. As each patient came in he had me take their blood pressure. I learnt a lot that carried on into second semester, aiding in my understanding of many subjects.

In O-Week this year I joined the rural health club NERCHA and throughout the year became an active member. With the club we visited local festive events in which we promoted rural health to children, through the fun of plastering their arms; the most notable event this year was Gunnedah's annual Land Fest. In 2012 we have already started to discuss high school and primary school visits in which we hope to raise awareness of higher education and rural health.

I recently revisited my old high school and talked to a group of students about my achievements since leaving. In my talk I emphasised the importance of goal setting and never giving up. Whilst there I also had a discussion with the school year advisor and I hope to return to talk to students who are interested in pursuing a career in rural health. I am also planning at the start of next year to visit my old primary school with a presentation on the highlights of university life and especially rural

health. Dr Appleton and I discussed the importance of showing the children of Bellbrook that there is a life outside the town that is achievable and rewarding.

I feel that this year I have grown so much more as a person and as a medical student. My knowledge in health, especially rural health, has grown tremendously and I am very excited to start my 2nd year in 2012.

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. To view our Tips for new scholars, go to: <http://ramus.ruralhealth.org.au/tips>



RAMUS scholar Johanna Warren (left) with her RAMUS mentor, Dr Eva Ditmar-Jansse

Conference Placement Program: grants to attend selected conferences

Current RAMUS scholars in any year of study and former scholars who are members of the RAMUS Alumnus program are eligible to apply for funding support to attend selected conferences through the RAMUS Conference Placement Program (CPP).

The list of eligible conferences for Semester 2 2012 will be issued in May. Scholars and alumni will be notified via email when the list is available.

Eligible conferences are those that have a rural and remote health context or will enhance clinical skills in rural practice and are being held in Australia.

Please note the due date for applications for any conference you are interested in. The due dates are strictly observed and late applications are unlikely to be considered. This is to make sure that applications can be assessed and successful applicants notified well before the conference, to give them plenty of time to organise their conference registration, travel and accommodation.

The CPP has become very popular and we often receive two to three times as many applications for a particular conference as the number of grants available. CPP applications are assessed against the selection criteria set out on the application form and preference is given to applicants who have not previously received a CPP grant.

Conference reports from scholars and alumni

In recent months, RAMUS scholars and alumni have attended a range of conferences with support from the RAMUS CPP. To view their reports and others, go to:

<http://ramus.ruralhealth.org.au/conference-placement>

Rural Health Clubs

Another of the requirements of RAMUS is that scholars join their university rural health club (RHC) within two months of being awarded a full scholarship.

Rural Health Clubs aim to promote rural and remote practice to their members through information exchange, placement opportunities, support and advocacy.



Jeremy Smith at the 2011 SPHINRPHEX (UWA) demonstrating the basics of suturing

They have a multi-disciplinary focus and run a number of activities each year to promote rural and remote health careers to their members. These activities provide fun and educational experiences and are great opportunities to network with other students from rural backgrounds who share similar interests. Find out more at: <http://www.nrhn.org.au>



Telietha Atkins helping out at the SHARP (Wollongong University) BBQ to welcome the 2011 cohort of medical students

Rural leadership training opportunity for RAMUS alumni

Former scholars who are members of the RAMUS Alumnus program are invited to apply for a sponsored place in the 2012 TRAIL (Training Rural Australians in Leadership) Program. This initiative of the Alumnus program supports the development of RAMUS alumni as leaders of the future in rural and remote Australia.

TRAIL is an intensive 8-day residential training program for emerging rural leaders and is presented by the highly regarded Australian Rural Leadership Foundation. To learn more, go to: <http://www.rural-leaders.com.au/>

The Alumnus program will sponsor one place in the TRAIL Program which takes place on 1-8 September 2012 in Canberra and surrounds. The sponsorship (valued at \$8,500 plus GST) will cover all costs of the program, including accommodation, meals, equipment and on-course travel, but not the cost of travel to and from Canberra.

Expressions of interest should be submitted by Monday 18 June 2012. For more information and to download the application form, go to: <http://ramus.ruralhealth.org.au/alumnus>

The successful candidate will be notified by mid-July.

You can read about RAMUS alumnus Robyn Silcock's experiences at TRAIL 2011 in the latest edition of the NRHA's *Partyline* (p.48). <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/publications/partyline-43-apr-2012.pdf>

Keep your contact details up-to-date

Have you recently moved house or changed your email address? Any time your contact details change, please call RAMUS on 1800 460 440 (free call), 02 6285 4660 or email ramus@ruralhealth.org.au so we can update your details on our database.

New group for medical students and junior doctors interested in rural practice

JuMP Rural (Junior Medical Practitioners in Rural Australia) is a new Rural Doctors' Association of Australia (RDAA) special interest group bringing together medical students and doctors in the early stages of their medical career who are interested in rural practice.

Each year, many medical students and junior doctors face the same challenges and decisions about preparing for rural practice and building their career in rural medicine. The aim of *JuMP Rural* is to share information and wisdom and to support one another. Talking to other people who are on the same career journey is a great way to get some tips, learn the tricks, share experiences, create networks and make new friends.

You do not have to be an RDAA member to join *JuMP Rural*, and membership of the group is free.

To read more, go to:

<http://www.rdaa.com.au/about-us>

Fact sheets on current rural health issues

The National Rural Health Alliance (NRHA) *Fact Sheets* (available at <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/factsheets>) are useful sources of concise, current and authoritative information on health issues that are relevant to people living in rural and remote Australia. Recent *Fact Sheets* deal with:

- Cancer in rural Australia
- Eye and vision health in rural Australia
- Women's health in rural Australia
- Alcohol in rural areas

The *Fact Sheets* do not usually include references but information on the sources used may be requested from the NRHA.

Get snapping!

Please send any photos you would like to share with your RAMUS colleagues to ramus@ruralhealth.org.au

Australian Journal of Rural Health

RAMUS scholars have free access to the *Australian Journal of Rural Health* (AJRH) through the RAMUS website. Scholars have recently received an email with instructions on how to access the *AJRH*.

The *AJRH* offers important research on Australian and international rural health practice. *AJRH* is a multidisciplinary refereed journal. It is peer reviewed and listed in Medline, as well as being covered by other major abstracting and indexing services. It provides research information, policy articles and reflections related to health care in rural and remote areas of Australia, and is an important publication vehicle for researchers and practitioners.



The April 2012 edition (Vol. 20, Issue 2) is now online. It includes two papers on rural medical workforce issues: one on the impact of rural clinical rotations in influencing career intentions, the other about the role of personality in general practitioners' decisions to work in rural areas. Other papers address specialist mental health care in rural settings and cardiovascular risk and acute myocardial infarctions. To access the *AJRH* go to: <http://ramus.ruralhealth.org.au/ajrh>

Prize-winning essay leads to RFDS placement

In 2011, Brooke Ah Shay (currently in 6th year at JCU) was awarded the Australian College of Rural and Remote Medicine (ACRRM) President’s Prize for her essay ‘What would influence your decision to pursue a career in rural medicine?’ The prize was a placement of up to two weeks in any rural location in Australia of her choice. Brooke decided to ask ACRRM to place her anywhere they wished in Western Australia.

To her delight, she was placed with the Royal Flying Doctor Service, based in Port Hedland, for ten days in September. Her time with the RFDS included several transfers to Perth, a primary retrieval from a remote station and drive-out clinics to the remote Indigenous community of Yandeyarra and to Marble Bar (the purported ‘hottest town in Australia’).



RFDS plane



Brooke Ah Shay watches over a patient as he is transferred to Royal Perth Hospital

Brooke described the placement as ‘eye-opening in many ways. I discovered what the life of an RFDS doctor actually entails – the rewards and many challenges – and was inspired by their commitment, work ethic and passion. I also learnt how the RFDS functions and the many services it offers to Australians (I was not aware, for instance, of the drive-out clinics it offers)...At the end of the day, I felt humbled to have worked with doctors, nurses and pilots who dedicate themselves to such an extraordinary and essential service.’

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Susan (left), Dane and Janine

RAMUS is an Australian Government initiative managed by the National Rural Health Alliance.