



NOVEMBER 2003 Edition - a newsletter for RAMUS Scholars and their mentors.

By now exams will, for the most part, be finished with the focus shifting to other work or holidays as results are being absorbed. We expect to be graduating approximately 120 RAMUS scholars in 2003 – a wonderful result for the graduates themselves, for their mentors and for us who have worked from a distance with the graduates for the duration of their scholarship.

RAMUS has had another successful year. For us, however, it was a year of bedding down changes to ongoing eligibility and acquittal requirements. The Scheme has moved one more year towards its goal of increasing the number of rural medical students in universities and ultimately increasing the number of medical practitioners who spend part of their professional careers in rural medical practice.

**Free Online access
to The Australian
Journal of Rural
Health**

Your free online access to the Australian Journal of Rural Health is now available. Access to the Journal is available through a link located on the RAMUS page in the members section of NRHA's website, www.ruralhealth.org.au.

To enter the member's section, go to the top left hand side of the home page and sign in. You will need the following details: Member ID; Username; and Password. If you do not have this information please contact a staff member at RAMUS.

Once you have logged in, go to Scholarships and click on RAMUS. The Journal link is on the top of the page.

Please call the **RAMUS Team on 1800 460 440** if you have any questions.

More broadly, issues affecting the delivery of general practice have come to the fore in two areas – first in the various iterations of changes to Medicare and also in the release of the findings and outcomes of the Stages 1 and 2 Report from the Rural Doctors Association of Australia *Viable Models of Rural and Remote Practice Project* (www.rdaa.com.au). Both activities are important in that they will have impact on how health is delivered in rural and remote Australia. Take some time during your break to become familiar with these important debates.

Letters have been sent to both scholars and mentors outlining reporting and acquittal requirements. The Scholarship Team can be of assistance to you in fulfilling these responsibilities or if you have not received advice about your requirements, please let us know.

Finally, our best wishes to you for the festive season and for a peaceful and successful 2004.

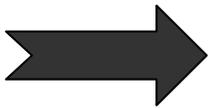
*Carmel Brophy
Manager, RAMUS*

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Scholar reports for 2003 are now due!!

Your report should be between 500 and 1000 words. Please remember your name...we receive many reports with no identification. Your scholar report should include the following information:

- address the aims and objectives of your learning plan;
- provide an overview of your involvement in rural activities;
- provide an overview of your contact with your mentor.



Excerpts from Scholar Reports

...“I will admit that for three years I was sceptical about how these scholarships would improve the likelihood of rural and regional students looking towards returning to the country after their training but now realise that the system you have in place is very effective in showing students like myself (who couldn't wait to get away from the country to enjoy the city lifestyle at university) exactly what the country means to them and my experience over the last five months has taken me from a state of indecision about specialisation to one of relative certainty of returning to the country and I'm glad I had the opportunity to open my mind in this way”.

*Thomas Forbes, RAMUS scholar,
Drysdale, Victoria*

...“The previous experiences that I have gained through RAMUS helped me to decide that my fifth year would be well spent in a rural area. Further I was able to relocate to the rural area because of RAMUS. Thus the objectives of my learning plan focussed on gaining a better understanding of rural health issues, gaining clinical experience from a rural perspective and reflecting on these with my rural mentor. I feel that I have achieved much more than I expected and have thoroughly enjoyed living and studying in a rural area”.

...“2003 has been an outstanding year living and working in a rural area. I have gained much practical experience and also a much better understanding of the problems faced by those living in rural areas. RAMUS has allowed me to focus on my study and make the most of the opportunities I have had”

*Jennifer Robinson, RAMUS scholar,
Forth, Tasmania*

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RAMUS Administration Evaluation Report

Thank you to everyone who responded to our evaluation examining the administration of the RAMUS Scheme. We received a large number of responses from scholars with a lower return rate from mentors. I am pleased to now be able to let you know the results of the survey from the independent analysis.

This analysis showed that stakeholders are generally very positive and supportive of the work of the RAMUS Scholarship Team.

Scholars have let us know that they are well-served by the Team and are very pleased with the level of service provided. Printed information, such as the application form, guidelines and scholar agreement, also seems to meet their needs. It is evident that the level of service to scholars is highly regarded.

A very small minority of scholars expressed concerns about payment delays and communication problems. In response to this feedback, from the beginning of the 2004 academic year, we will be establishing a client feedback register to make sure that any lapses of service are responded to appropriately. The register will also signal if there are specific areas that need to be addressed or, alternatively, are working well.

Scholars also indicated that further clarification of the reporting requirements, including the completion of learning plans, would be valuable. We have taken this advice and will be incorporating some amendments in the RAMUS supporting documentation that better links the learning plans and reporting requirements.

The responses from mentors were less positive. While many mentors indicated they were satisfied with the services and support they receive, a reasonable number stated that our service required further development. A number of mentors suggested that we increase contact and interaction with mentors. It will be a challenge for us to meet the needs of the mentors requiring additional contact and still maintain our current positive relationships with mentors content with the information they receive. We will be contacting mentors early in 2004 to ensure that they have the supporting information they require. Other ways to improve services to mentors will be canvassed in later issues of *'Gone Fishin'*.

Additionally, some of the issues raised concerned policy matters beyond the control of the Scholarship Team. These included:

- inappropriate application and advertising dates;
- unfair selection process for independent students;
- delays in processing scholars' first payment;
- excessive documentation; and
- changing requirements for scholars.

We will be passing these concerns to the Department of Health and Ageing.

In summary, the evaluation has demonstrated that the RAMUS Scholarship Team is performing its function well and the Scheme is administered to the level and degree needed.

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RAMUS Payments in 2004

To ensure that your RAMUS scholarship payments continue into 2004 you must meet the following requirements by the end of December 2003 if you are a graduate student, by the end of February 2004 if you are an undergraduate student:

- Sign and forward a new Scholar Agreement for 2004.
- Complete and forward a new Database Form.
- Provide confirmation of your enrolment for the 2004 academic year.
- Provide a report from yourself commenting on your involvement in rural activities, how you met the aims and goals of your learning plan, and contact with your mentor. This should be between 500 and 1000 words.
- Provide a report from your mentor, commenting on your participation in the Rural Doctor Mentor Scheme, with reference to your learning plan submitted for the 2003 academic year.
- Provide a Learning Plan for the 2004 academic year.
- Provide proof of membership to your rural health club.
- Provide a copy of the previous financial years Notice of Assessment for the Australian Taxation Office.
- A certified copy of your academic results for 2003.

Please note that you must fulfil all of the above requirements prior to your first scheduled RAMUS payment in 2004. Graduate students who fulfil the above requirements will receive their first payment on the 13th January 2004. Undergraduate students who fulfil the above requirements will receive their first payment on the 6th March 2004.

If you have any questions with regard to continuation of your RAMUS scholarship please contact a staff member on 1800460 440.

To All Mentors

On behalf of the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing, and we wish to thank Mentors for their participation in the RAMUS scheme during 2003. We look forward to your continued participation in 2004.

A quick reminder – the key areas we ask Mentors to work on with their scholars are:

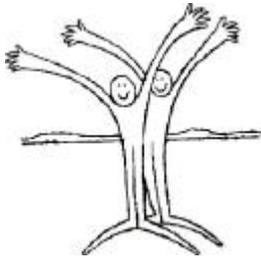
- the development of the scholar's Learning Plan at the beginning of each year;
- contact with your scholar – quarterly by email with one face-to-face meeting;
- prepare a brief assessment of the activities undertaken by your scholar. The assessment is required annually in December and should be forwarded to NRHA. A proforma Mentor report can be located on the NRHA website, www.ruralhealth.org.au

Remember to forward a Tax Invoice for \$330 (including GST) to the RAMUS Team.

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Rural Health Club News

Contributions from Rural Health Clubs for the information of RAMUS Scholars.



BREAATHHE is the University of Newcastle rural health club and we consist of over 300 students from the allied health, medical and nursing fields who are interested in rural health. The club was started in 1995 in response to a growing concern about the lack of doctors working in the country but our focus and our membership has expanded to include all allied health students and other interested individuals. Joining the club does not mean you are one of the “committed few” who have already decided they want to work in the country. What it means for most of us is that we have open enough minds to consider it as an option and would like to have more experience and information so that we can make informed decisions. The club is also an opportunity to meet other people outside of our individual courses and have a lot of fun in the process of learning about rural health.

BREAATHHE stands for “bringing rural education and awareness to Hunter Health education” and in an attempt to do this we plan many activities for each year. We conduct many social events as well as information nights about scholarships, trips to rural areas, high school visits, skills workshops and much, much more. We communicate through an email group and have a representative from each discipline so that hopefully nobody gets left out of the loop. We send out e-mail notices about upcoming events as well as important information passed onto us by the NRHN (National Rural Health Network) such as conferences, new scholarships, etc. We liaise extensively with academic staff and are involved with curriculum issues including rural education and also have interests in Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander health care and the practice of medicine in rural areas throughout the world. We are closely linked with the other rural health clubs around NSW and Australia through the NRHN and we occasionally have combined events with some of the other NSW clubs.

Our website is in the process of being updated but the address is www.breathhe.com so feel free to have a look. If you wish to contact us please e-mail our administrator Allison Schmidt on aschmidt@mail.newcastle.edu.au or try calling our club office on (02) 4921 7431.



AURMS is the Adelaide University Rural Medical Society

AURMS is made up of approximately 150 members coming from all years of medicine, dentistry and psychology at Adelaide Uni.

What AURMS offers you:

We have a jam-packed calendar of events including:

- **Information Evenings**, on topics such as indigenous health, rural specialist opportunities, medico-legal nights, getaways – student placements and allied health.
- **Social Events**, pubnights, interclub bowling and a bushdance with the other South Australian rural health clubs.
- **Skills Trips**, for 1st –4th yr to rural SA locations to see the town, meet the local doctors/health professionals and practice some clinical skills.
- **Rural High School Visits**, trips to speak to rural high school students about doing a health career and getting to university.
- **Rural Health Committee's**, such as Indigenous health committee.

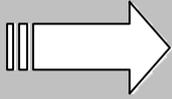
Membership is only \$5 a year!!!

Membership forms available from the AURMS office in the Dept. of GP, Level 3 Eleanor Harrald Building.

To find out more or to join, check out the website,

www.generalpractice.adelaideuni.org/rural.htm or email aurms@hotmail.com

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NEXT ISSUE - March 2004

- ✓ Suggestions of Rural Activities.
- ✓ Reports from Mentors.

Introducing Helen Rogers ...a new face on the RAMUS team.

Helen commenced work with the National Rural Health Alliance, working specifically with the RAMUS Team as a Project Officer in mid November. Helen will be your first point of call when making inquiries about your RAMUS scholarship.

Helen has just returned from three years overseas, where she and her husband lived and worked at an international boarding school in Swaziland, Southern Africa.

During this time they were lucky enough to travel extensively throughout Southern Africa. Despite having enjoyed their time overseas, Helen has welcomed her return to Australia, particularly Canberra, to all those things familiar, particularly family and friends.

Prior to Helen's overseas adventures she worked as a Housing Manager within a community-housing organisation in Canberra, which provides alternative housing options to those in need of accommodation, including students.

Helen has many varied interests from the somewhat bizarre sport of Canoe Polo through to Hockey, and pretty much anything else that is outdoors. Travelling is a new addition to the list of 'must do's', as she says "there are still so many cultures and countries to explore, all of which are so very different from Australia".

Having been brought up and schooled in a rural area she has a familiarity and empathy with rural issues. It was only when she attended university to complete a science degree that she moved to a large city. When possible Helen returns to her family property in the Hunter Valley, NSW.



RAMUS Contact Details

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Email: ramus@ruralhealth.org.au

Postal: PO Box 280
Deakin West
ACT 2600

Merry Christmas

We hope you have a wonderful Christmas and enjoy your holiday with family and friends.

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