

From the RAMUS team

Welcome to the April 2021 *RAMUS Newsletter*.

This newsletter contains the announcement of the 2020 Mentor Award recipient, excerpts from 2020 completing scholar reports, call for abstracts for the 8th Rural & Remote Health Scientific Symposium to be held in Canberra 6-7 October 2021 and some news from AJRH.

We would love to hear from Scholars, Mentors and Alumni about the impact COVID-19 has had on your studies, placements or clinical work. Send your experiences to ramus@ruralhealth.org.au and advise if you give permission for it to be published in the Alliance's online magazine, Partyline - www.ruralhealth.org.au/partyline.

The next RAMUS newsletter will be issued in August. Contributions (including photos) and suggestions are very welcome. Please send them to ramus@ruralhealth.org.au by 29 June 2021.

Best wishes

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Acquittal requirements

Current acquittal requirements include your Scholar Mentor Plan which is due now. It is essential you have contact with your mentor throughout the year.

Proof of membership of your Rural Health Club is due now also.

Keep Your RAMUS Details Up To Date

Have your contact details changed recently? You can update your details online through the RAMUS website at: <http://ramus.ruralhealth.org.au/update-ramus-scholar-details> or email ramus@ruralhealth.org.au.

RAMUS on Facebook

Have you joined the RAMUS Facebook group?

The group contains current RAMUS news and gives you the opportunity to communicate with the RAMUS team as well as other RAMUS scholars, mentors and alumni.

To join the RAMUS Facebook group, go to: www.facebook.com/groups/348490061904468

Friends of the Alliance

Students are encouraged to join Friends – the student rate for 2020-21 is just \$22.00. For more information or to join go to:

www.ruralhealth.org.au/joinfriends



2020 RAMUS MENTOR OF THE YEAR AWARD

Mentor of the Year for 2020 has been awarded to Dr Ian Stewart, Brucedale, NSW who was nominated by Naomi Clements.



Naomi Clements at her graduation with Dr Ian Stewart

I would like to nominate Dr Stewart for the Mentor of the Year Award. I touched on it briefly in my scholar report, but the mentor relationship has been one of the most important aspects of the RAMUS scholarships for me. He has helped me organise opportunities for both learning and teaching, networking and support. He has been my teacher, supervisor, mentor and friend – not only through my degree, but through the year I deferred. This unwavering support and regular communication has continued in the time since I have graduated. I am so grateful for the time, effort and dedication Dr Stewart has invested in me, and I can only hope that in the future I can be half as helpful to a student who comes my way.

Mentor Experience - Comments from Scholars who completed in 2020

- This year contact with Dr Stewart, my mentor, has been integral to both my personal wellbeing and academic success. During my obstetrics & gynaecology rotation (his retired specialty), he was a wealth of information and would patiently run through mock exam questions with me, revise anatomy, and could always link theoretical information to real-life scenarios. This was an exceptionally helpful tactic for me, as I can struggle with rote learning and memorisation, but perform far better when I truly understand the significance of the information in a relatable patient context. My revision certainly wasn't limited to just one area, and he became a sounding board for surgical cases, practicing psychiatric formulations, revising emergency trauma management, and discussing any ethical dilemmas I came across. We caught up regularly for a cup of tea and revision through early 2020, were relegated to phone consults during COVID, and then were finally able to catch up in person again in the latter half of the year. I am immensely grateful to Dr Stewart and the support he provided, and I know that, in the future, I will look forward to being able to mentor other students and help them find their passion, listen to their worries, and help equip them with the tools they need to take on the world of clinical medicine, providing support in whatever area it is needed.
- This year I also spent time with my RAMUS mentor, going to the Glen Innes Correctional Centre to examine and treat the inmates. At the Correctional centre I witnessed the multitude of sociocultural factors which contribute to the incarceration of these people, and how this then leads to or exacerbates health concerns. My mentor attends this clinic once a fortnight and it really amazes me how much impact she can have in this seemingly short amount of time. This has really inspired me to remember how a little can go a long way in a community which would otherwise have nothing. This is always a

unique experience and I really enjoy the exposure to this side of medicine.

- I concluded that the combined efforts of JCU medicine and the RAMUS mentor program have undoubtedly changed my practice forever. I have felt empowered over the course of my degree to make a difference to those from all walks of life, however the rural sector of medicine still lies closest to my heart – particularly with regard to the health status of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander communities. It's incredibly disheartening to know that our Indigenous population are still disproportionately burdened by disease, and it is a true atrocity that this sort of inequality persists in a first world country with boundless resources and education. More than ever before, I feel empowered to amend this situation.
- It was unfortunate that I was unable to physically catch-up with my mentor more this year, mainly due to my year-long rural placement. My mentor has been with me every step of my medical journey, he has provided a stable foundation in the early years of my degree and is always up for a chat to see how things are progressing with my degree, and to offer advice should I ask.

support RAMUS has provided me; it has given me the time to focus on my studies whilst also easing the financial burden on my parents who have been suffering through the drought. RAMUS has provided life changing support to me and I'll forever be grateful for this.

- I would also like to say that this scholarship has really changed my life. I am so fortunate to be supported through my degree by such a generous sum of money. It has taken all the pressure off my parents and allows me to live independently from them. I will be forever grateful for the RAMUS scheme and the opportunities it has created for me.
- I have thoroughly enjoyed my experience as a RAMUS scholar, and hugely appreciate being a recipient. I am a strong proponent for schemes such as this which facilitate rural origin students – especially those facing financial difficulty – to pursue higher education and do so without the prospect of working full time to pay rent while studying full time or relying on parents who are usually stretched thin too. For me, having the RAMUS scholarship was the difference between being able to complete my degree or not. I was originally enrolled in UNSW Medicine in 2014 (with no idea about RAMUS when I applied and receiving a too-late offer of an MRBS scholarship), and withdrew in June, burnt out from working five days a week and struggling with my physical and mental health. Having the RAMUS scholarship when I re-enrolled in 2015 meant I didn't have to work two jobs, I could focus on my studies – which I did, and I thrived.

Thoughts from Completing Scholars 2020

- After a long year, I was very pleased to receive my final year results. I will be graduating my Doctor of Medicine degree with a distinction average, and for my final Portfolio Exam I received a high distinction. I'm very proud of these results and I truly believe the wide variety of exposure and experience I've received through RAMUS has contributed to these results. I am also so thankful for the financial

- As a result of COVID-19 restrictions across Australia the original plan to travel to Thursday Island Hospital for my six-week rural placement was altered. Instead of travelling north, I had the privilege of being reallocated south to Longreach District Hospital where I undertook a three-week rural placement. The reduced timeframe was allocated to ensure all students were able to undertake placement at a rural site. During my time in Longreach I was a welcomed member of an incredible team of

doctors, nurses and allied health staff. Many of the doctors working within the hospital are rural generalists and, as such, have a vast array of specialist skills in their area of training including emergency medicine, anaesthetics, obstetrics & gynaecology, and general medicine. It was extremely inspiring to work alongside these physicians and I was able to learn a lot from them. The team was incredibly welcoming and keen to teach myself and the other students on site in Longreach. As an active member of the team, I was able to gain valuable hands-on experience in theatre, suturing, cannulation and phlebotomy. Whilst in Longreach I delivered an oral presentation discussing the healthcare system, history, community demographics and services as well as my involvement in the broader community. This activity really allowed me to immerse myself within the community and learn a lot about the region. Whilst there I attended the local CrossFit gym. This experience gave me insight into the community spirit, comradery and mateship that exists within the town. It is true when they say, 'everyone knows everyone' and you really get a feel that the community is so happy to have you there. Further to this, I undertook an Indigenous learning experience whilst on my rural placement wherein I engaged with local members of the Indigenous community and was able to gain insight into the history of the region and the Indigenous community that exists in Longreach today. Indigenous health is a specific interest area of mine and, as such, I thoroughly enjoyed the opportunity to learn more about the community living in the region and their specific health needs.

- I feel that my community involvement over the last year was just as valuable to my medical career as was the academic side. When I started working early this year, I was able to bond with the patients over local groups we share interests in, or local knowledge of events or places. After four years in this community, I am starting to feel like a local. In fact, at this point I can't imagine leaving! I have set up a little life here and while my street fills with people on a mass exodus from Melbourne, I am very content that I chose the rural life.

I don't usually like to write about my own achievements, but I am very proud of the way I finished my med school years. 2020 was a difficult year – the PPE was hot, the hours were long, there were frightening times and sad times. But I am so grateful for the clinical experience I received – while city placements closed down, our rural clinical school forged ahead. When our community events closed down, I was able to implement some online options instead. I ended the year by receiving a degree with distinction and was the recipient of the Peter Vine Award for efforts in the community. I also became involved with the Rural Training Hub, making promotional videos for their website to encourage other doctors to consider rural training. I'll continue to work with the Hub team while I am based in Albury Wodonga. I hope I can encourage others to give rural life a try.

- Another notable aspect of rural placement was the time I spent outside of the hospital, exploring the local attractions with fellow staff members and immersing myself in community events. I became a member of the local parkrun and ran early each Saturday morning with two of the PHO doctors I was working with. We also travelled in 4WD further north into the Cape region to go camping, fishing with the locals, exploring local surrounds and updated our historical knowledge of the area. One of the hospital's Aboriginal health workers took us to surrounding bushland to educate us on some local bush tucker, as well as to the Weipa Cultural Centre to enhance our knowledge of the local customs and various traditional owner groups. All in all, my rural experiences this year were invaluable, and I have grown more than any other year prior.

8th Rural & Remote Health Scientific Symposium



The Alliance's 8th Rural and Remote Health Scientific Symposium, **Connecting research, practise & communities** is being held in **Canberra 6 - 7 October 2021** and the **call for abstracts** is now open.

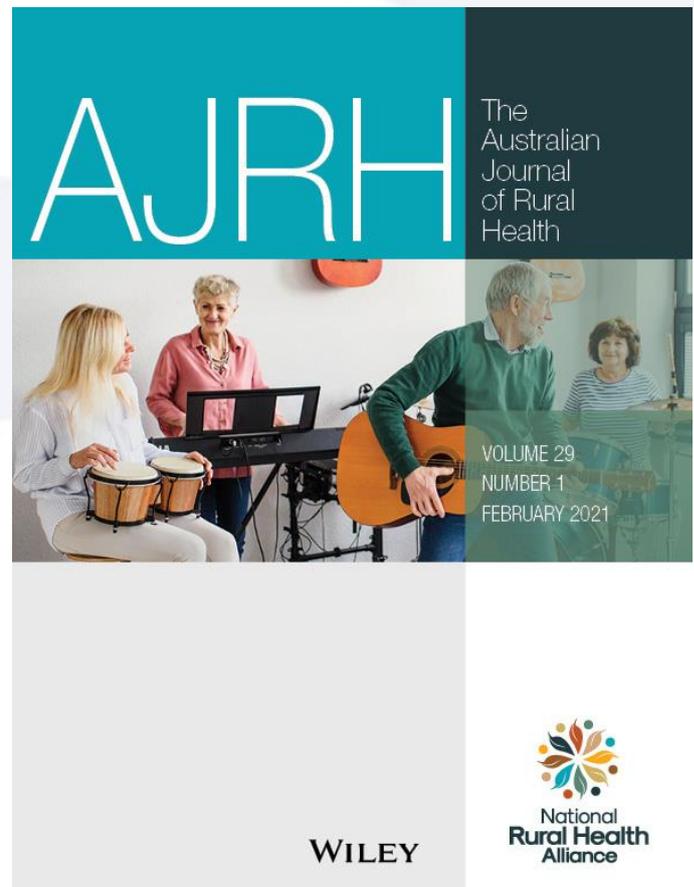
Abstracts are invited for a variety of presentation types including 20-minute oral presentations and interactive workshops. The final program will be determined by the abstracts received after they have been reviewed by the Abstract Review Committee.

The Symposium will focus on rural and remote health research that informs strategic health policy, and health service challenges in rural and remote Australia into the future.

The call for abstracts closes on **13 June 2021**.

<https://www.ruralhealth.org.au/8rrhss/>

Australian Journal of Rural Health



You don't have to wait to get the latest research from the Australian Journal of Rural Health. [Early View](#) on the Wiley Online Library website allows access to the online version of record before inclusion in an issue.

You can access the full content of all articles through your university library or contact us for details of how to use the RAMUS scholar [portal](#).

AJRH is now on [Twitter](#) so you can follow the Journal to see the latest news about articles and stay in touch with discussions around research developments.

RAMUS scholars have free online access to the Australian Journal of Rural Health (AJRH).

Please contact ramus@ruralhealth.org.au for access.

Indemnity and Insurance

As a RAMUS scholar, it is your responsibility to ensure that you have the appropriate indemnity insurance cover if you are undertaking supervised clinical activity as part of your RAMUS-related rural activities, such as during visits to or placements with your RAMUS mentor.

You may be asked by medical practices or health services to provide evidence of your indemnity insurance cover.

Do not assume that your RAMUS rural activities are automatically covered by your university's indemnity and insurance arrangements for medical students. You should check whether the planned activities are included in your university indemnity insurance cover. Those that do not form part of your formal university course and curriculum requirements may not be covered.

You can consider joining a medical defence organisation (MDO) that provides medical indemnity insurance. Several MDOs offer special packages for medical students for free or at low cost.



RAMUS is managed by the National Rural Health Alliance on behalf of the Australian Government.

www.ruralhealth.org.au