

November 2010 A newsletter for RAMUS Scholars, Mentors and Alumnus members

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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

As we are nearing the end of 2010 we wish all RAMUS scholars, mentors and alumni the very best for the holiday season and the coming year. Congratulations to the 139 scholars who are graduating and completing their scholarship this year. We hope you will maintain your contact with RAMUS by joining the Alumnus Program.

We have recently posted the details of the end-of-year scholarship requirements to all scholars. If you haven't received the letter please contact us so we can check your address and re-send the information. Full details of the requirements that continuing scholars must fulfil before their payments can start again in 2011 are also available on the RAMUS website (<http://ramus.ruralhealth.org.au/scholars>).

For new scholars who will be writing a RAMUS scholar report for the first time, go to page 3 for some tips on how to do this.

Every year, through the annual RAMUS Mentor Awards, we celebrate the wonderful contribution that our mentors make to the RAMUS Scheme. The call for nominations for the Mentor Awards for 2010 is now open. This is the opportunity for scholars to acknowledge those mentors who have given them exceptional support. See page 2 for details of how to nominate your mentor for an award.

Thank you to the alumni who are available to become RAMUS mentors from 2011. Many of these former scholars see becoming a mentor an opportunity to 'give back' to the RAMUS Scheme.

The 2011 application round for RAMUS is now open. The closing date is 17 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 and a commitment to practising in rural Australia in the future, who believe they have a financial need, to consider applying for the scholarship.

We have enjoyed supporting RAMUS scholars, mentors and alumni during 2010 and we look forward to continuing to support you in 2011.

Susan, Lesley and Janine  
(the RAMUS team)

## RAMUS in the news

RAMUS scholar, Heather Hanks (5<sup>th</sup> year, James Cook University) has been awarded this year's Westpac RDAA Medical Student of the Year Award. Heather is President of JCU's rural health club, RHINO, and has also been closely involved in the work and activities of the National Rural Health Students' Network (NRHSN). In 2009, Heather and Anna-Jane Gordon (an Occupational Therapy Student) initiated and led a research project prompted by Federal Government changes to the tertiary student income support legislation and independent Youth Allowance eligibility criteria. Their research looked at rural and remote student barriers and enablers to tertiary education, and they presented the findings to the Senate Inquiry on Rural and Regional Access to Secondary and Tertiary Education Opportunities.

Dr Lindsay Sherriff of Kerang VIC, who is a long-standing RAMUS mentor, has received the ACCRRM-RDAA Peter Graham 'Cohuna' Award for more than 20 years of service to his community in northern Victoria. Dr Sherriff has advanced skills in anaesthetics, obstetrics and child health and has been involved in teaching and mentoring medical students and junior doctors for many years. Dr Sherriff has mentored several RAMUS scholars since the Scheme began in 2000. He and his wife, Dianne, who is also a doctor (and a RAMUS mentor), travel regularly to Tanzania in Africa to run clinics.

RAMUS scholar Sarah McPherson (3<sup>rd</sup> year, University of NSW) was awarded the RACGP Medical Undergraduate Student Bursary 2010. Sarah won the Student Bursary for her essay entitled 'My kind of town – what does a town need to attract (and keep) a general practitioner' and received a certificate, a glass memento and registration, travel and accommodation to attend the recent GP10 Conference.

Former RAMUS mentor, Dr Debbie Kors of Laurietown NSW, received the 2010 GPET/Medical Observer GP Supervisor of the Year award. She won the award for her commitment to attracting, training and shaping the next generation of GPs for her community. She is a lecturer at the UNSW Rural Clinical School, a medical educator for North Coast GP Training, a board member of Hastings McLeay GP Network and, from next year, will be a PGPPP supervisor.

Dr Paul Mara of Gundagai NSW, a former RAMUS mentor, has been elected President of the Rural Doctors' Association of Australia (RDAA).

## 2010 Mentor Awards – call for nominations

Nominate your mentor now for the 2010 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 2010, 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 31 December 2010.

The 2010 RAMUS Mentor Awards will be announced at the 11<sup>th</sup> National Rural Health Conference (Perth 13-16 March 2011) and in the first RAMUS newsletter for 2011.

For profiles of last year's RAMUS Mentor Award recipients, take a look at the May 2010 issue of the RAMUS newsletter (<http://ramus.ruralhealth.org.au/newsletter>).

### 2011 application round

Applications for RAMUS 2011 opened on 9 November 2010 and will close on 17 January 2011.

The 2011 RAMUS Application Form and Guidelines are available at <http://ramus.ruralhealth.org.au/applying>

## End of year requirements

All scholars should have already received a list of 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

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

### Continuing Scholars

#### Due 31 December 2010

- Scholar Details Form 2011
- Scholar Agreement 2011
- Scholar Report 2010
- Academic results 2010
- Confirmation of enrolment 2011
- Income details 2009-10
- Mentor Report 2010

#### Due 30 April 2010

- Scholar-Mentor Plan 2011
- Please ensure you are a member of your university's rural health club

### Completing Scholars

#### Due 31 December 2010

- Completing Scholar Details Form
- Scholar Report 2010
- Academic results 2010
- Mentor Report 2010

## How to write a scholar report

Every year, scholars are asked to write a report on their experiences as a RAMUS scholar over the past year. Scholars' reports for 2010 are due at the end of the year.

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

Please include photos, such as from rural health club events, visits to your RAMUS mentor or other rural activities.

In preparing your report ask yourself questions such as:

- To what extent did I fulfil the goals I set in my 2010 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 activities, such as clinical placements or academic requirements, 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 if you have received university awards or prizes, or have published an article or presented at a conference, please include the details.

Your comments on your experience of the RAMUS Scheme during 2010 are very welcome.

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

We prefer to receive scholar reports electronically as email attachments. You can download the Scholar Report pro-forma at

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

Alternatively, you can submit your report by mail or fax.

Your report, or extracts from it, may be published in the RAMUS newsletter, on the RAMUS website or in other National Rural Health Alliance publications. We may also wish to use your photos in the newsletter or on the website. De-identified extracts from RAMUS scholar reports are also used in reports on the Scheme to the Department of Health and Ageing.

**RURAL AND REMOTE AUSTRALIA**  
**THE HEART OF A HEALTHY NATION**

11<sup>th</sup> National Rural Health Conference  
Perth 13-16 March 2011

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

**early bird registration now available**

## We need your photos



Damian Brauchli sent these photos of his time on a trauma weekend in Smithton, Tasmania. He learnt to use the jaws of life, and was instructed on emergency skills in thoracocentesis and intubation.



Damian developed a keen interest in photography whilst studying on the north-west coast of Tasmania and is looking forward to challenges and opportunities in 2011.

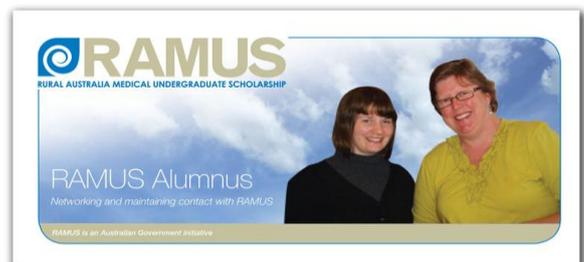


We would enjoy seeing your photos and they may feature in the RAMUS Newsletter. Please follow Damian's lead and include photos with your 2010 scholar report or send any photos you want to share to [ramus@ruralhealth.org.au](mailto:ramus@ruralhealth.org.au)

## Former scholars available to be RAMUS mentors

The register of former RAMUS scholars who are available to be RAMUS mentors from 2011 has recently been updated. About 30 former scholars have indicated that they are available to become mentors from next year. These potential future mentors are practising in rural, regional or remote locations in NSW, NT, QLD, SA, VIC and WA. They all are keen to support a current RAMUS scholar just as they were supported by their rural doctor mentor during their studies.

For any scholars who need to find a new mentor in 2011, please contact the RAMUS team and we will search the register and give you the contact details of former scholars you can approach. Following normal RAMUS practice, scholars will be responsible for contacting potential mentors and negotiating arrangements with them.



The RAMUS Alumnaus program is open to scholars once they have graduated and completed their scholarship. Membership is free. Former scholars who have joined the Alumnaus program are eligible to become mentors once they have commenced vocational training (usually PGY3) and are working and/or training in a rural, regional or remote location.

### Mentor reports and payment claims for 2010

Thank you to all rural doctors who have mentored a RAMUS scholar in 2010.

We have recently sent current mentors the forms for them to submit their 2010 reports on their scholars and their payment claims.

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

## Payment dates in 2011

The RAMUS scholarship payments dates for 2011 are:

- **Graduate Payment Schedule:** commencing 13 January, second payment on 20 January and fortnightly thereafter; first payment \$500, all other payments \$380.
- **Undergraduate Payment Schedule:** commencing 3 March; fortnightly, first payment \$550, all other payments \$450.

You should have received a RAMUS scholarship 2011 calendar, showing the 2011 payment dates, with our 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 2011, you must contact the RAMUS team before 31 December 2010 to discuss your particular situation.

## Conference Placement Program 2011

Applications are now open for the Conference Placement Program (CPP) for 1<sup>st</sup> semester 2011. The list of eligible conferences for 1<sup>st</sup> semester is available at <http://ramus.ruralhealth.org.au/conference-placement-program>

Scholars continuing in 2011 and former scholars who are members of the RAMUS Alumnus program are eligible to apply to the CPP.

For conferences being held in February and March 2011, please submit your CPP application by **24 January 2011**. Eligible conferences in this period include:

- Austrama, Sydney 17-19 February 2011
- 11<sup>th</sup> National Rural Health Conference, Perth 13-16 March 2011
- Heart Foundation Conference, Melbourne 17-19 March 2011
- NSW RDN/RDA Summer Refresher Conference, Coffs Harbour 25-27 March 2011

The Conference Placement Program for 2010 has closed and all the funds available for 2<sup>nd</sup> semester 2010 for support to attend conferences have now been allocated.

## Conference reports

Since the last RAMUS newsletter a number of scholars and alumni have attended a conference with support from the RAMUS Conference Placement Program. For some, this was their first experience of a conference.

### Spring Seminar on Emergency Medicine (SSEM), Coffs Harbour, 28 September – 1 October 2010

**Xavier O’Kane** (Alumnus, graduated 2009) reports that the SSEM was a mix of academic, professional, and social events spread across several days. He attended talks about snake envenomation, teaching styles, Traumatic CT studies and common cognition errors. Xavier says, ‘Every one of these was superb; the highlight being the radiology talk’ and that ‘hearing first class lectures from physicians Australia wide will undoubtedly help me continue to work as an emergency doctor.....after participating in this seminar I now have a better knowledge about various pathways and medical specialities, and with this I now am more confident continuing in my career as a junior doctor.’

For **Scott Robson** (Monash University, 4<sup>th</sup> year) the SSEM was the first conference he had attended. Highlights included a presentation on patient retrieval run by a doctor who had spent significant periods of

time with the Royal Flying Doctor Service. '[The presentation] demonstrated the importance of decisive action in [retrieval] situations and the impact of transfer on saving lives.' Scott says, 'I was able to learn a lot about many areas of medicine, some of which I had never even considered before. When I mentioned my rural aspirations many of the consultants at the conference were very positive offering assistance, if required, or placements.'

**Rachel Jack** (University of Wollongong, 1<sup>st</sup> year) began her adventure to the SSEM with a 'rather epic road trip' from Nowra on the NSW South Coast to Coffs Harbour. She says, 'As imaging can be one of the real challenges faced by students and training doctors I was particularly interested in the presentation on Head CT in Trauma. It was a great learning experience to see the difference in epidural, sub-dural and sub-arachnoid haemorrhages as well as later brain matter changes as seen in CT.'

#### **Australian Society of Anaesthetists National Scientific Congress, Melbourne, 2-5 October 2010**

**Ryan Juniper** (Alumnus, graduated 2008) says, 'Hearing addresses from current day "greats" in anaesthesia was memorable. I attended lectures on a wide range of topics: anaesthetic training; safety in anaesthesia; peri operative medicine; and others that highlighted shortcomings in the provision of rural medical care, specifically, access to blood products in remote locations, third-world need, and differences in the provision of anaesthesia in remote and extreme locations.....The lecture series on rural and remote anaesthesia provided great insight into working and training in rural areas, and has given me practical options to practise remotely even during training.'

**Matt Jarvis** (University of Tasmania, 5<sup>th</sup> year) reports, 'Having been interested in anaesthetics for some time, either as a career or as part of a GP subspecialty, I found the conference a fantastic opportunity to meet individuals practising and training in anaesthesia. They were able to provide me with great insight into the training process, assessment, registration and the day to day work of an anaesthetist.'

#### **Australia New Zealand Burns Association Annual Scientific Meeting, Darwin, 5-8 October 2010**

**Melissa Hinrichs** (Monash University, 5<sup>th</sup> year) reports that this year's ANZBA conference carried a distinctly

rural and remote theme of *Crossing Cultures and Continents*. Melissa presented her research looking at inflammatory proteins in burns and their relation to scarring and reports that her presentation was well received and that she had a number of interesting discussions with clinicians following the talk.

She also comments, 'This year's rural health focus was a highlight, and a number of the speakers opened my eyes to the real possibilities offered in rural practice, particularly rural specialty practice..... ANZBA was a fantastic opportunity to further my future career prospects whilst furthering my understanding of the optimal prevention and management of burns injury, regardless of the patient's location.'

#### **GP10: Royal Australian College of General Practitioners National Conference, Cairns, 6-9 October 2010**

Several RAMUS scholars and alumni attended GP10 and all expressed their appreciation of the focus on students & junior doctors in the conference program.

**Katrina De Marco** (Alumnus, graduated 2009) says, 'This is the first conference I have been to and I was completely astounded by the amount of information and knowledge one could gain from a conference.' Katrina has recently been selected to be a GP registrar and will begin her GP training next year. She says, 'I was fortunate enough to come across a number of inspiring junior doctors who played an important role in the GP Registrars' Association. They were extremely helpful at answering any of my questions regarding the training program and they also had their own stories of the paths they have chosen in general practice. They also gave me advice on some worthwhile rotations in country Queensland.'

**Tau Loseli** (University of Wollongong, 3<sup>rd</sup> year) nominated highlights as, 'the presentations given by Dr Harold Jacobs and John Buckley and the workshop held by the renowned Professor John Murtagh. Dr Jacobs and Dr Buckley gave an insightful overview of the General Practice pathway. .... This presentation really encouraged me to not only pursue a career in GP, but to also practise in a regional or rural setting.....Professor Murtagh hosted a workshop full of practice tips and diagnostic advice to medical students and junior doctors. It was a great opportunity to meet and listen to

a doctor whom I hold in high regard and have many of his textbooks.'

Tau also says he feels that the conference 'truly helped me in my future career choice and has stimulated my personal and professional development.'

**Sarah Mulhare** (University of Sydney, 3<sup>rd</sup> year) attended sessions which were student-focused. For Sarah, 'The session which was most beneficial, was the workshop which described what life is like as a GP and what the training program is all about. As a student, I am still trying to get my head around all of the different training programs, with regards to how long they take, the different prerequisites, and, of course, the assessments! I found it extremely beneficial to have an overview of all of the above.'

**Rebekah Short** (Alumnus, graduated 2009) comments, 'The conference was not all about amazing experiences and inspirational stories. The practical workshops on strapping knee and ankle injuries were extremely useful.'

Rebekah was also able to discuss her career options with Dr John Buckley who is heavily involved in assisting junior doctors with their career choices as they choose to embark into general practice. She says, '... it was extremely helpful to be able to sit down one-on-one with someone like John to help nut out where I should be heading in the next five years. I have been fortunate enough to be selected into the GP training program commencing in 2011. An application to a regional training provider is just the beginning. There are so many other choices that need to be made. The contact I have made with John helped guide me into the areas that I need to be focusing on.'

**Joe Speekman** (Monash University, 5<sup>th</sup> year) says, 'With only seven weeks remaining as a medical student, the time was right for me to consolidate and broaden my knowledge of general practice, get a further idea of the benefits of general practice and understand what it takes to be a GP....Though I was aware of the general principles regarding how to become a GP, it was good to have the different pathways explained in their entirety. Furthermore, hearing about the flexibility and breadth of variety available in general practice highlighted its potential to provide a fulfilling career.'



## The Australian Journal of Rural Health

Workforce issues are a prominent focus of the October 2010 issue of the AJRH. The editorial by David Lyle and David Perkins from the Broken Hill University Department of Rural Health highlights the health workforce reforms currently under way through the programs of Health Workforce Australia and the potential roles of University Departments of Rural Health in these reforms. It argues for building clinical training capacity to meet the expansion of training places now being offered by tertiary institutions. In addition, the authors note that the commitment to clinical training in rural and remote areas is predicated on there being a return on investment to those communities that support students in the form of greater numbers of health professionals equipped and motivated to work in rural and remote communities.

The editorial is supported by an original article that asks: *Why do junior doctors not want to work in a rural location, and what would induce them to do so?* The study supports the continuation of policies that are known to encourage rural practice choice, but also suggest that personal (especially for women), and professional factors (for all), as well as opportunities for

short term tenures in rural areas, need to be considered for the current generation of doctors. Other articles look at similar issues affecting recruitment and retention of nurses.

In a timely contribution to discussion of workforce planning, another article suggests that using remoteness areas alone to prioritise workforce incentive programs and training requirements has significant limitations. A better approach would include measures of socioeconomic disadvantage and workforce supply to better target health inequities and improve resource allocation in Australia.

In another original article, a study of 561 patients of general practices (75 per cent from rural general practices) reports results which show that Australian guidelines for diabetes treatment should recommend screening for depression.

Don't forget: RAMUS scholars can access current and back issues of the AJRH at <http://ramus.ruralhealth.org.au/ajrh>

You can also sign up for regular alerts of AJRH contents by email and RSS feeds.

## Scholar survey 2010

Each year selected RAMUS scholars are surveyed about their experience and perceptions of the RAMUS Scheme and their future career intentions. The survey results are reported to the Department of Health and Ageing and help to build a picture of the effectiveness of RAMUS in supporting rural students in their medical studies and of the career aspirations of RAMUS scholars.

RAMUS scholars who commenced their scholarship in 2010 and scholars who are completing their scholarship in 2010 are asked to take part in the annual RAMUS evaluation survey for 2010.

If you are new or completing this year, please go to <http://www.surveymonkey.com/s/FZ5W598> before 31 December 2010 to complete an online questionnaire. The questionnaire is quite short and should take no more than five minutes to complete.

The questionnaire responses are confidential and will be placed in a statistical database that is entirely separate from the personal records of scholars.

Information from the survey will be used in de-identified, consolidated form only.



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