

LIFE AS AN EXTENDED RURAL COHORT STUDENT

The Extended Rural Cohort (ERC) is a stream within the Bachelor of Medical Science and Doctor of Medicine (MD) course that gives you the opportunity to spend extended time in regional and rural north-western Victoria during your clinical training years. Small group sizes, friendly and committed clinical teachers and ample opportunity for hands-on clinical experience make this an exciting program.

YOUR FIRST TWO YEARS AT CLAYTON

ERC students spend the first two years of the medicine course at the Clayton campus, although with some metropolitan and rural clinical placements. Rural health plays an important part in the studies of all students during this time and is integrated into Years 1 and 2 at the Clayton campus.

Year 1 Introduction to Rural Health program

The focus on rural health begins in your first week of the course. The Year 1 Introduction to Rural Health Program takes place at Clayton. It comprises a series of interactive educational activities undertaken throughout the year.

Year 2 Rural Placement Program

The Year 2 Rural Placement Program places students at Monash Rural Health teaching sites for two weeks. Here you participate in a range of rural health clinical and community-based activities offering a variety of learning opportunities. You have the opportunity to develop clinical skills and increase your knowledge of regional and rural health service delivery systems.





YOUR CLINICAL TRAINING YEARS

Years 3 – 5 are conducted in clinical settings and ERC students spend all of Years 3 and 4, and 12 weeks of Year 5 in regional and rural north-western Victoria in Bendigo, Mildura and rural community hubs.

Year 3

Year 3 is a full academic year placement. You're based at either Monash Rural Health Mildura and the Mildura Base Hospital, or Monash Rural Health Bendigo and the Bendigo Hospital.

Small group activities are a feature and you participate in a range of student centred learning activities that include clinical bedside teaching, ward and operating theatre experience, problem-based learning (PBL) and timetabled lectures and tutorials.

Year 4

Year 4 consists of two semester-long placements which are undertaken in rural and regional hospitals, general practices and a wide range of community based centres.

You're placed with either Monash Rural Health Mildura or Monash Rural Health Bendigo for one semester for your regional hospital rotation. For the other semester you're based with a general practice in a rural community (Swan Hill, Kerang, Maryborough, Castlemaine, Woodend or Gisborne). While you're based with a general practice, you have the opportunity to work with your supervising GP in the local hospitals.

The Year 4 program comprises core clinical rotations in women's health, children's health, general practice and psychiatry. While in the rural hubs you see many patients yourself. You also have the opportunity to acquire a good understanding of the challenges and rewards facing GPs who have responsibility for the total care of patients in their communities.

During your regional hospital rotation you have contact with both specialists and GPs and acquire a good understanding of the relationships between specialists and generalists working together to provide collaborative care for both local and referred patients.

Year 5

The final year of the Monash medicine course is conducted in clinical settings and is designed to equip you with the skills to become a competent intern. You participate in a range of learning experiences which are designed to substantially enhance your clinical reasoning, diagnostic and case management skills. You also take part in supervised clinical practice and related learning activities. Year 5 gives you the opportunity to broaden your knowledge and skills in areas of medicine that particularly interest you.

All medical students complete six six-week rotations in their final clinical year. These include core rotations of medicine, surgery, aged care and emergency, and the chance for selective studies. A number of back-to-base days are held at the Clayton campus throughout final year and attendance is compulsory.

As an ERC student, you'll spend two rotations in the north west (Bendigo and Mildura). The other four can be undertaken at Monash regional, rural or metropolitan clinical settings.

Mildura and Bendigo currently offer medicine, surgery, aged care, emergency rotations and a range of options for selective studies.



Meet Tanzina Kazi - Extended Rural Cohort student in Mildura

After two years studying in Clayton, Tanzina Kazi is back in Mildura where she grew up. She's one of 14 students undertaking their first year of clinical training at Monash Rural Health Mildura.

"We're a very tight-knit group, which is a big positive," said Tanzina. "We do a lot together." They explore local markets, picnic spots, Orange World and local restaurants. "We have a really, really good food culture in Mildura, so we do a lot of eating" she laughed.

Tanzina was well aware of the Extended Rural Cohort stream in Monash's medicine degree by the time she was

applying for a place in a medical course. "Monash does a really good job in Mildura: they invite the year 11 and 12 students over and do a few workshops and an information night," she said.

"And all the medicine students that I talked to before I started doing medicine were ERC students. They all just raved about how good ERC is and how much they get to do compared to their city friends. And I thought, well if I get to do a lot and I get to be back home for a year, then why not? So it was my first preference."

She agrees studying medicine in Mildura is a great experience and comments

on how well the staff look after the students. "We feel we have a really good connection with them. It's a great community feeling here."

After two years' foundation studies at Clayton, Tanzina is enjoying the hands-on learning in Mildura. "It was a difference experience and I did enjoy it. I was staying at college so I got to meet a lot of new people. But, at the same time, it was just sitting in lecture theatres for lots of hours during the week. And when I compare it to what I'm doing now in Mildura, I'd much rather be here than sitting in lecture theatres."

INTRODUCING THE EXTENDED RURAL COHORT TRAINING SITES

Mildura

Monash Rural Health Mildura is located adjacent to Mildura Base Hospital where it hosts medicine students from Years 2 – 5. It offers a sophisticated simulation learning suite, tutorial rooms, a student lounge and access to the hospital library. Its close proximity to the hospital gives you easy access to clinical training opportunities and clinicians.

Mildura Base Hospital has over 145 beds with more than 23,000 admissions and 29,000 presentations to the Emergency Department each year. Serving a large rural and remote area, the hospital also provides a range of speciality services including general, orthopaedic and vascular surgery; obstetrics and gynaecology; paediatrics; medical imaging; oncology; and mental health. The hospital is also affiliated with La Trobe University, and provides undergraduate and postgraduate medical, nursing, and allied health education.

Sitting on the Murray River about 550 km north-west of Melbourne and 400 km north-east of Adelaide, Mildura has a population of around 60,000 people. With mild winters and warm summers, the district produces dried fruits, olives, grains, vegetables, citrus, table grapes and wine. From wineries and alfresco cafes to water skiing on the river, exploring the nearby Mallee national parks or year round festivals and celebrations Mildura is a vibrant and varied regional city with something to offer all tastes.

Bendigo

Monash Rural Health Bendigo is located at the front door of the new Bendigo Hospital in the health education and research precinct, along with the Bendigo Primary Care Centre and the La Trobe University Rural Health School. It hosts medicine students from Years 2 – 5 and students from the University of Melbourne who study with them. The teaching site has a sophisticated simulation learning suite, auditorium and tutorial rooms, access to the hospital library, a student lounge and on-site café.

Bendigo Health is spread over a number of campuses and serves an area nearly a quarter the size of Victoria. A 713-bed multidisciplinary service, it incorporates medical, surgical, rehabilitation, mental health (inpatient and community-based), aged care and ambulatory and community services.

Specialty services at the hospital include critical care, cardiology, renal dialysis, maternal and women's health, child and adolescent health, oncology, and orthopaedic services.

Located 150 km north of Melbourne, Bendigo is a thriving modern city with a proud goldfields heritage. With a regional population of approximately 109,000 Bendigo boasts a range of industries. It also supports a vibrant sporting and cultural scene, a tempting array of restaurants, cafes and local wineries.

FREQUENTLY ASKED QUESTIONS

Can I choose where I go for clinical placements?

Students nominate their preference for Year 3 and 4 clinical placements within certain constraints. Ideally, you'll spend time in both Mildura and Bendigo as well as one of the rural hubs. There are many logistical issues to consider when allocating students, so while the University tries to accommodate those preferences, we cannot always do so.

When do I make a choice?

In the second semester of Years 2, 3 and 4 you'll be asked to nominate your preferences for clinical placements in Years 3, 4 and 5. Provisional placements are published in late October and placements are confirmed once end of year assessment results have been ratified by Board of Examiners in December.

Will I need a car?

Regional and rural placements can be difficult if you do not have a car as there is often travel to other clinical training sites.

Where will I live?

In your first two years you'll live in either on-campus college style accommodation or arrange your accommodation privately. During your two-week Year 2 regional/rural placement, we organise and pay for your accommodation. Once you move into rural and regional communities in the north-west, you'll live in Monash subsidised accommodation. This is either college-style or share houses and units located close to the hospitals and general practices you're placed with.

What does accommodation cost and how am I charged?

Monash Rural Health student accommodation is heavily subsidised. You'll pay a nominal accommodation rental fee which covers the cost of your fully furnished accommodation, WiFi, utilities and garden maintenance. This fee is reviewed each year. All regional and rural accommodation is self-catering. The fee is charged to individual student accounts and you'll receive a monthly invoice, with a number of methods to pay. See med.monash.edu.au/srh/accommodation.html for details.

Is there a return of service obligation?

No, a CSP place in the ERC does not entail any return of service obligation.

FURTHER INFORMATION

About the course and entry requirements

1800 181 838
future@monash.edu
med.monash.edu/medical/northernvic

About Monash Rural Health

+61 03 9905 1521
med.monash.edu/srh
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