Dean’s Report

Gippsland Medical School staff and students are now well in to the second semester programs. The Year A students have been considering the placements options for Year B and similarly the Year B students are well advanced in the organisation of the placements for Year C.

Many of our staff have been working hard to prepare the Year C program which will be running for the first time in 2010. We have now recruited all of the General practices that we will be placing students with next year and are embarking on the process of professional development of those GPs. We have farewelled Dr Julie Grant who left the GMS at the end of June to pursue private business interests and Judy Lawless, our finance officer who has moved back to a position in the Gippsland Regional Clinical School. We are delighted to welcome Jo Kingsley, who has started with us as our finance officer.

The cooler weather here seems such a relief and respite from the hot summer and the risk of bushfires. However, the storms and squalls do offer other challenges. Winter does represent the main season for our teaching activities, and we are always concerned about safety on the roads for staff and students, particularly in the wet and the dark.

Finally, the invitations for the Monash Multiple Mini Interviews have just been sent out to about 120 applicants for the GMS for 2010. I would like to wish them all good luck for the interviews in September.

Chris Browne
Head, Gippsland Medical School
April 2009

Dates to Remember

- Medical Education Conference
  Wentworth Hotel, Sydney
  30th – 31st October 2009

- 14th Ottawa Conference
  Hotel Regency, Miami, Florida
  15th – 20th May 2010

Information Day
23rd May 2009

The Gippsland Medical School Information Session was held on Saturday, May 23rd 2009 in the Auditorium. This was a great success with two buses bringing students from the Clayton and Caulfield area. Over 120 students attended on the day which commenced with a welcome and introduction from A/Prof Robyn Hill who also went into great detail regarding the course and included video footage by Professor Chris Browne’s which came across well and gave students an insight into what they can expect being a Gippsland Medical School student.

A/Prof Wayne Hodgson discussed the selection process for the graduate entry course as well as the application deadlines. Questions and Answers were fielded by the staff in attendance which included several Theme coordinators.
Overview of Rating Scales: PAS and Cornell.
Dr Ian Presnell

Presented to registered nurses and associate colleagues supporting the Volunteer Interview Program, Gippsland Medical School (GMS), Monash University, Churchill.

On Thursday 7th May 2009, Dr Ian Presnell, psycho-geriatrician and senior lecturer into the Monash Medical Course, led a 90 minute presentation on the Psychogeriatric Assessment Scale (PAS) and the Cornell Depression/Dementia rating scales to an audience of 27 registered nurses and associate colleagues and 8 medical students. These individuals came from as far away as Korumburra to attend this interactive education session.

The GMS medical students were Year A students participating in the Volunteer Interview Program (VIP). The VIP was introduced in Year A of the GMS curriculum to increase the students’ exposure to communication skills involving older persons. Each student spends one or two days in the program, under the guidance of Dr Sonia Allen and her colleagues at the village. The student’s task during the morning session is to use basic communication skills to elicit a (non-medical) lifetime narrative from an independently living older person, residing in the retirement village. This life-story is reported back to the group during a reflective session in the afternoon.

The carers of the retirement villages had requested additional training in the assessment tools used to rate depression and dementia in the elderly. These are essential for the on-going funding of Residential Aged care Facilities. Attendees expressed gratitude to Monash University for providing and facilitating this educational session. There was broad agreement that the content of the education was extremely valuable in interpretation, applying and understanding the tools. Another session is planned for later in the year on issues surrounding end-of-life and palliative care.

New Staff Member

Dr. Kathy Brotchie, an experienced and well regarded general practitioner, joined the School in April as a Senior Lecturer and will become part of the Year A Theme IV team as a tutor in both clinical skills and problem based learning. Kathy has recently returned from spending a year in Canada as Medical Director of Continuing Health Professional Education, in the Northern Ontario School of Medicine. She lists her goals as combining emergency medicine and primary health skills in a remote of rural environment; improving health outcomes in indigenous communities; promoting good palliative care for those in isolated communities and creating a positive education environment to encourage further general practitioners to embrace rural practice. As well as her busy working schedule, Kathy enjoys skiing, bush-walking, travel and photography.
Interview with Judy Embleton,
Manager Student Services

Judy, who grew up in Morwell, is from a long established Gippsland family. Her grandmother’s farm was bought by the SEC and is where Hazelwood pondage and power station now stand. Her father, a keen beekeeper, was a local identity around the Valley; the council used to call on him to remove unwanted swarms of bees from chimneys. He travelled all over Gippsland looking for sites for his bee hives and knew every inch of bushland. Her mother grew up in Jeeralang and knew every inch of the country. He would give them their first opportunity. It was great, a great atmosphere to work in and I learnt so much about people.” She then worked on the international telephone exchange for “Telecom in the city, in the days before ISD calls when you had to book an international call through an operator.

After returning to Gippsland in the early 90s, Judy eventually started with Monash as a temp working in the School of Nursing. Judy organised the clinical placements for nursing students. She found placements for students in hospitals, community health settings, mental health and aged care in every state. "It didn’t seem like a role that you would want; you don’t win any popularity stakes as clinical placements officer. You send people where they don’t want to go and you only have so many places to offer.” Judy reflects that the job gave her invaluable knowledge of clinical services across the whole of Victoria and beyond.

Appointment to GMS as our Manager of Student Services was a big change of role for Judy. “I’ve absolutely thoroughly enjoyed the fact that I was here from the beginning. When I started there wasn’t even a building, no students, not many staff and to get in at the beginning and to see it all fall into place was tremendous. Our very first student to arrive was Ru, (Ruvimbo Mudarikwa) she still reminds me of this. It has been very exciting; to watch the school grow, to watch the team grow, to be part of selecting the admin team and see it all come together.”

Judy really enjoys her day to day interaction with the students. “With the relatively small number of students, it’s more personal and you can give them a more personal service which I really enjoy. I get bombarded by emails with issues and problems, but I enjoy that and enjoy solving some of their problems.”

Judy has seen a huge change in the valley during her life. She recalls the thriving community in the 60s, when nearly everybody worked for the SEC. Most of her school mates ended up with a role at one of the power stations. It was a dynamic and thriving community then, and to see it disintegrate with privatisation of the power industry, and with people moving away, and the shops becoming empty, has saddened her.

Judy is keen to see more local students gaining entry to the GMS. She is a strong advocate of going out to the schools and letting them see that it is possible to do medicine here in Gippsland without moving away, especially with the introduction of the new medical Bioscience degree.

Judy is a keen and knowledgeable collector of children’s books, particularly 1950 classic children’s literature that she grew up reading. She also enjoys cooking, theatre, and reading. She is particularly passionate about Mary Grant Bruce and the Billabong books. “I read them as a child and loved them; many were given to me as a child as presents. I spent years trying to collect the whole set which I eventually did and then spent some time collecting some of her other works. Mary Grant Bruce was of course a Gippslander. She came from Sale. You can drive past her homestead. I like her books as they are a history of Australia, from the 1st world war to the gold rush. I am surprised that there has never been a film or a TV series.”

Judy has two pieces of advice for new, young professional staff members. Get some formal qualifications and enjoy what you do. “Formal qualifications are something I never had during my working career. Most of my training has been in-house training. There is no point in coming to work and then whingeing about what you do; it’s a third of your day. You spend a third of your life at work and you need to be happy. Don’t just stay in a job because it’s convenient.”

I am sure that Judy will continue to be a loyal and popular staff member of the Gippsland Medical School.

Chris Browne
Student News

Gippsland Medical School Back to Base

The serious side of back-to-base and the not so serious…

The Gippsland Medical School’s inaugural cohort of medical students now in the second year of their four-year degree attended learning sessions in the campus Auditorium over two days. The event is a unique feature of the Gippsland Medical School curriculum. Formally, graduate-entry medical students undertake most of their studies on campus in their first year, and then proceed to be based in immersive environments in hospitals, GP clinics, etc in their subsequent three years.

During “Back-To-Base” sessions, students are given the opportunity to participate in integrative activities. The first Back-To-Base program, held on 31 March and 01 April, consisted of case presentations on the relevant clinical elements of a patient presenting with jaundice, workshops on medical law and ethics, as well as a presentation from the Victorian Doctors’ Health Program. Two more Back-To-Base sessions are scheduled over the next few months.

The Gippsland Medical School is hosting two visiting students from Imperial College London. Ms Irum Subderji and Ms Priyanga Vijayakumar are third year medical students who will be participating in short-term research projects under supervision. In addition to the research experience they will gain, both students intend to spend some time travelling around Australia before they return to London in August.

John Flynn Scholarship Scheme

Established in 1997, the John Flynn Scholarship Scheme is an integral part of the Australian government’s long-term strategy to attract more rural doctors and improve the quality of health care in rural areas. Working closely with a rural doctor mentor and the host community, medical students develop a better understanding of the challenges and rewards associated with rural medical practice and non-metropolitan health care services.

This year five of our Year A students have been awarded scholarships.

Congratulations!

John Flynn Scholarship Awardees

Brendan Maher Astrid Richards Joshua de Bono
Michelle Dunn Laura Selkrig

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