

National Rural Health Alliance E-forum – 27 October 2000

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MINISTER LAUNCHES RURAL INFORMATION SERVICES

Federal Minister for Health and Aged Care, Dr Michael Wooldridge launched two new rural health communication tools - an internet site and newsletter - to provide country Australians with up to date and relevant information about Government rural health initiatives.

Speaking in Broken Hill at the University Department of Rural Health (UDRH), Dr Wooldridge said the Government was committed to improving access and providing better health and medical services in rural and regional Australia.

The rural health web site and the newsletter, "Regional Health Check", are two key tools specially created to provide this information to rural Australians.

The site - www.ruralhealth.gov.au - provides accessible, accurate and comprehensive information on rural health issues, policies and services. It has three key access points: health information for individuals, health workforce information and information on regional/rural health services and programs.

The Regional Health Check newsletter seeks to reach the widest possible rural audience and is being distributed via rural doctors' surgeries, medical and community health centres, local pharmacies, and Members of Parliament, Centrelink and Medicare offices.

The launch was part of a day of activities in Broken Hill for Dr Wooldridge and the Director General of the World Health Organisation, Dr Gro Harlem Brundtland. As well as touring the UDRH, they visited the Aboriginal Medical Service (Maari-Ma), and the Royal Flying Doctor Service base.

The Minister's announcement is available at <http://www.health.gov.au/mediarel/yr2000/mw/mw20093a.htm>

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QUEENSLAND RURAL HEALTH WEEK

Queensland Health and the State's leading medical organisation have joined forces to promote Rural Health Week in more than 50 communities throughout the State. "The whole idea is to promote the importance of healthier lifestyles in a way that is locally relevant," Health Minister Wendy Edmond said today.

Ms Edmond said she was pleased that Queensland Health and the Australian Medical Association Queensland (AMAQ) had agreed to jointly promote and support the Rural Health Week concept.

Each community would decide on the timing of its Rural Health Week during either October or November.

The Rural Health Week 2000 theme is "Does YOUR health pass muster?"

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From: Sue Gray <hawa@inet.net.au>
Subject: Government Health Industry Human Resource Conference

Further to earlier notices, the HR Conference organising committee is pleased to report that the program for the Human Resource Conference has been finalised. The conference theme is "HR Conference 2000 - The New Approach.

The quality of the program will undoubtedly set the scene to make this years conference the best ever. A change from the traditional hotel style venue and the Freehill's Cocktail Party entertainment on Thursday evening, incorporating a Journey Under the Sea through Hillarys Underwater World, will provide the perfect setting for learning and networking.

Underwater World is located at the Hillarys Marina, which is approximately 25 minutes from Perth CBD. Hillarys Marina offers outstanding ocean views, the opportunity for a relaxing walk along the boardwalk or beach and a vibrant atmosphere with over 40 retail stores including 15 cafes and restaurants. Entertainment is available at the tavern and nightclub and quality self contained apartments are conveniently located for those who wish to stay overnight.

A maximum of 200 delegates can be accommodated at the conference, with registration at 1.30pm for a 2.00pm start on Thursday 16 November 2000 and closing at 4.00pm on Friday 17 November 2000.

The conference website at <http://www.health.wa.gov.au/hrconference> provides a registration form, the program, a nomination form for the Peter Baldwin Memorial Award, accommodation options and other relevant information you may require. Please register early to avoid disappointment.

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CHIC PANEL FORUM - INFORMATION TECHNOLOGY CONNECTING HEALTH?

The recent release of the Report of the National Electronic Health Record Taskforce, HealthConnect, has received considerable 'airplay' and stimulated some extensive discussion with a range of core stakeholders.

In an effort to ensure the broad range of IT issues related to HealthConnect are identified, discussed, documented and reported, the Collaborative Health Informatics Centre is hosting a series of panel forums. Each forum will feature a series of highly informed speakers providing information to increase your knowledge & awareness of HealthConnect and IT&T in healthcare in Australia in years to come.

The forums are as follows:

Brisbane, Friday, 27 October 2000, 7-10am, Rydges Hotel Southbank, Glenelg St, South Brisbane
Sydney, Tuesday, 31 October 2000, 7-10am, Sydney Marriot Hotel, College St, Sydney
Melbourne, Wednesday, 1 November 2000, 7-10am, Eden on the Park, Queens Rd, Melbourne
Perth, Friday, 3 November 2000, 7-10am, Lamonts, Holmes a Court Gallery, Brown St, East Perth

Further information is available at <http://www.chic.org.au/chicforum.htm>

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RURAL PHARMACY MAINTENANCE ALLOWANCE

(Reprinted from Computachem E-Newsletter, 15 October 2000. To subscribe, send a single word e-mail "Subscribe" to neilj@computachem.com.au)

Pharmacies in remote places could benefit to the tune of \$40,000 a year from the new index being used to determine the size of the Rural Pharmacy Maintenance Allowance. This is no doubt in recognition of the fact that the "cost of dispensing" in remote places is not the same as the mythical 26,000-script volume a year. This is good news for those in the bush. It must also be cheaper for the Commonwealth to pay the isolated operator a lump sum rather than clicking on a dispensing fee of say \$10 a script.

Until this changes the fee is still \$4.40 for the pharmacy in Cooktown or Port Headland, as it is in Bourke Street Melbourne. The true cost of providing pharmacy services to remote living Australians will never be known while this "head in the sand" philosophy is followed.

It is no wonder the Registered Nurse operating out of Alice Springs is still waiting for a pharmacist somewhere to find her an improvement on the old fashioned dosette box, with all of it s desert dirt and ants

with the lid sliding off! Maybe someone s \$40,000 could help fund the research, but then again, don t hold your breath waiting.

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CONSIDERING A CAREER IN HEALTH

(Reprinted from Commonwealth Department of Health and Aged Care "Regional Health Check", October 2000)

High school students in outback NSW are gaining a valuable insight into the range of career options available in the health field, thanks to an innovative careers program jointly funded by the Commonwealth and NSW Governments.

Conducted by the NSW Rural Doctors Network, the program educates students about the variety of health professions and highlights some of the challenges that come with choosing a career in the country.

The program was developed in response to research that showed students of rural origin are more likely than their city counterparts to choose a career in rural practice after graduating. The long-term aim is to overcome the shortage of GPs and other health professionals in rural areas.

The program consists of a "Health Careers Kit", which is distributed to high school careers advisers; high school work experience through Rural Area Health Services and two annual careers workshops.

The workshops are coordinated by the Dubbo Remote & Rural Health Training Unit as well as the Universities of NSW, Newcastle and Sydney.

The workshops provide students with the opportunity to visit health facilities such as community health centres and hospitals, learn about the various health scholarships available and speak to university students undertaking tertiary health courses about their experiences at university.

For more information on the schools program contact Emma Woodhouse at the RDN on (02) 913-5955 or by email at ewoodhouse @nswrdn.aust.com

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DAWN OF THE E-DOCTOR

(Reprinted from "The Australian", 17 October 2000)

General practitioners are leading IM/IT (information management/information technology) development across Australia's health sector, with an explosion of possibilities being mooted in relation to electronic health, according to an industry expert.

"General practice has been addressing particularly important questions and tackling some hard issues," General Practice Computing Group national co-ordinator Frank Quinlan said.

The GPCG has just released for comment a draft Strategic Framework for IM&IT in General Practice 2001-2006, which will continue the work begun in the strategy's first stage.

Mr Quinlan said the GPCG had developed some important standards and was now ready to test how these could be implemented on the ground.

The GPCG website is at <http://www.gpcg.org>

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6th NATIONAL RURAL HEALTH CONFERENCE

The 6th National Rural Health Conference is to be held at the National Convention Centre, Canberra, on 4-7 March 2001. The initial announcement is at <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au/sixthconf/index.htm>.

Please remember also that the Conference will, next year, for the first time incorporate the Infront-Outback Rural and Remote Health Scientific Conference.

The best email contact for the 6th Conference is conference@ruralhealth.org.au

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CONTRIBUTION AND SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION AND DISCLAIMER

The NRHA e-forum is a forum for the expression of YOUR views. Contributions are sought on any topic relevant to rural health concerns. Please send contributions to the moderator, Jim Groves, at grovesc@winshop.com.au.

The NRHA e-forum is edited by a third party moderator, Jim Groves. As such, the Alliance does not control postings and the contents do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Alliance. Nor do postings necessarily reflect the view of Jim Groves or any organisation he is associated with. Jim Groves can be contacted at grovesc@winshop.com.au.

The e-forum is sent to a mailing list of the Alliance and those have indicated interest through the subscription box at the NRHA Web site (<http://www.ruralhealth.org.au>). This issue is going to 754 recipients. Please forward a copy to any colleague you think may be interested.

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