

National Rural Health Alliance E-forum – 25 April 2003

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From: Lesley Fitzpatrick <lfitzpatrick@ozemail.com.au>  
Subject: New Web-Based “Commonwealth Forum on Globalization and Health”

Ronald Labonte, Professor, Universities of Saskatchewan and Regina, and member of the Canadian Coalition for Global Health Research, is the inaugural ‘host’ of a new web-based Commonwealth Forum on globalization and health sponsored by the Commonwealth Secretariat. Launched in April, the Commonwealth Forum consists of a number of articles and excerpts on various facets of globalization and health, available directly from the Forum’s web-site (<http://www.ukglobalhealth.org/>) or through links to other URLs. Initial discussion questions are also suggested. Participants are encouraged to suggest new readings for future postings. New materials will be added on a monthly basis.

To visit and/or participate in this Forum, go to the UK Partnership for Global Health web-site (<http://www.ukglobalhealth.org/>) and click on the heading “Commonwealth Forum” on the left-hand list.

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PARTYline is the official newsletter of the National Rural Health Alliance. Keep up to date with rural health policy information and good news stories on living and working in the rural health community. Available online on <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au> or receive a hard copy by emailing [michele@ruralhealth.org.au](mailto:michele@ruralhealth.org.au)

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From: Shelagh Lowe <selowe@bigpond.com>  
Subject: Postgraduate allied health scholarships

Due to issues that have arisen concerning the NRRAHAS draft definition of rural and remote allied health being used while still in draft form for the first round of funding for these scholarships - the Commonwealth have requested readvertising the scholarships which for this round for which now all the non medical and non nursing health professional workforce is eligible. The closing date for applications has been extended to the 29th April 2003. New guidelines and application form can be downloaded from [www.ruralhealth.org.au](http://www.ruralhealth.org.au)

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### BUSH CRISIS LINE - 1800 805 391

Bush Crisis Line is a twenty-four hour confidential telephone support and debriefing service for multi-disciplinary remote and rural health practitioners and their families. It is staffed by qualified psychologists with remote and cross-cultural experience, is toll free and available from anywhere in Australia. For more information [http://www.crana.org.au/pandp\\_bcl.html](http://www.crana.org.au/pandp_bcl.html)

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### FEDERAL HEALTH INITIATIVES

The media has been rife with speculation this week about a new Medicare package the Commonwealth is expected to announce this week. Differential rebates for GPs in rural and remote areas has been one item included in this speculation. All Health Minister Kay Patterson has said is that it will provide hundreds of millions of dollars in incentives to doctors to encourage them to provide affordable access to their patients. Her statement is available at <http://www.health.gov.au/mediarel/yr2003/kp/kp03045.htm>. Some media remarks by the Prime Minister are available at <http://www.pm.gov.au/news/interviews/2003/interview2254.htm>. Comments are available from the AMA (transcript available at <http://www.ama.com.au/web.nsf/doc/WEEN-5LU2LE>), Australian Divisions of General Practice ([http://www.adgp.com.au/client\\_images/5973.pdf](http://www.adgp.com.au/client_images/5973.pdf)) and the Federal Opposition (<http://www.alp.org.au/media/0403/20004229.html>).

Meanwhile, the Government has announced its proposed funding for public hospitals under the Australian Health Care Agreements. The Prime Minister's announcement is available at [http://www.pm.gov.au/news/media\\_releases/2003/media\\_release2252.htm](http://www.pm.gov.au/news/media_releases/2003/media_release2252.htm). The AMA response is available at <http://www.ama.com.au/web.nsf/doc/WEEN-5LV8EQ> and the Opposition response is available at <http://www.alp.org.au/media/0403/20004244.html>

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The "Australian Journal of Rural Health" is a refereed journal with a national and international reputation for quality scholarship. Its focus is multi-disciplinary and it includes articles of interest to general practitioners, nurses, allied health professionals, pharmacists, health administrators, universities and rural health units. Reduced rates apply to members of some organisations. For more information see <http://www.blackwell-science.com/ajr>

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### MAKING MEDICARE WORK FOR ABORIGINAL PEOPLE

A public awareness campaign to encourage Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander Australians to get a Medicare card is among a raft of new initiatives announced by the Federal Parliamentary Secretary for Health, Trish Worth.

"One of the keys to unlocking the services provided in the mainstream health system - such as visiting a GP, attending emergency or outpatients at a public hospital or purchasing subsidised pharmaceuticals - is a Medicare card," Ms Worth said.

Some of the resources include an indigenous enrolment form where prominent community members can vouch for identity; an informative and entertaining Well and Good Magazine; a poster that promotes having a Medicare card; and a 1800 number that people can call for more information.

Ms Worth said another measure is an in-principle agreement to undertake consultation and development of a possible new Medicare Benefits Schedule item for doctors to provide health checks for adult indigenous people. This would mean that doctors would be able to charge Medicare for the cost of a consultation with a patient that is focussed on prevention, not just treating a particular illness.

"I am delighted to be able to launch today a regional planning initiative that involves the Federal, State and community sectors working together to improve local health services, which is being mirrored all over Australia," Ms Worth said. Ms Worth said other regions across Australia are working on similar plans and proposals.

"I look forward to the day when every Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander person has ready access to primary health care services," Ms Worth said.

The full text of Ms Worth's statement is available at <http://www.health.gov.au/mediarel/yr2003/tw/tw03010.htm>

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#### YOUNG DOCTORS OPPOSE GEOGRAPHIC RESTRICTION ON PROVIDER NUMBERS

All Australia's Doctors-in-Training organisations said they are united against any proposal to introduce geographic restrictions on provider numbers. The Australian Medical Students Association, National Rural Health Network, Doctors in Rural and Remote Training Association, AMA Council of Doctors-in-Training and the General Practice Registrars Association acknowledge the overall shortage of doctors in Australia. However, any attempt to introduce geographic restriction either directly or by linking provider numbers to practices or Divisions will not help fix the problem, the organisations said. The full text of the statement is available at <http://www.ama.com.au/web.nsf/doc/WEEN-5LMVKW>

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#### AIHW REPORT ON MENTAL HEALTH

There were an estimated 10.8 million visits to general practitioners for mental health-related conditions in 2000-01, especially for depression, according to a report from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW). Depression accounted for one in every three mental health problems managed by general practitioners.

"Mental Health Services in Australia 2000-01" also shows that general practitioners managed a larger number of mental health problems for female patients than for male patients. This applied across all age groups with the exception of people under 15 years of age. The majority of patients with a mental health problem managed were aged 35 to 54 years.

Report co-author David Braddock said that the figures highlighted the key role played by General Practitioners in the provision of mental health-related care. Mr Braddock said that there were also

several million contacts during the year with community mental health care facilities, but data had not yet been finalised for these types of services.

The report shows that patients from remote or rural areas had fewer specialised separations per 1,000 population than patients from metropolitan areas. There were 10.5 mental health-related separations with specialised psychiatric care for patients from metropolitan areas per 1,000 population compared with 6.1 specialised separations per 1,000 population from rural areas and 3.4 specialised separations per 1,000 population for patients from remote areas. On the other hand, there were 4.3 mental health-related separations without specialised psychiatric care for patients from metropolitan areas per 1,000 population compared with 6.4 per 1,000 population from rural areas and 9.2 per 1,000 population for patients from remote areas.

The AIHW statement is available at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/media/2003/mr030416.html> and the full report at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm?type=detail&id=8518>

The AMA responded to the report with a call for more funding for community-based mental health services, saying that the findings of the report, highlight, yet again, the need for realistic funding of community-based mental health support services, including extended GP visits. The full text of the AMA statement is available at <http://www.ama.com.au/web.nsf/doc/WEEN-5LN6BM>

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Interested in becoming a “friend” of the Alliance? Become more involved with the work of the Alliance by becoming a “friend”. “friends” support the Alliance by being an integral part of the Alliance’s policy and evaluation process. They also receive other benefits. For more information on membership see <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au>

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### CONCERNS OVER CHILDREN’S DENTAL HEALTH

The end of the 1990s brought an increase in the number of decayed, missing or filled deciduous (baby) teeth in Australian children, according to a report released by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare. There was also a corresponding drop in the percentage of children with no tooth decay experience.

The AIHW statement is available at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/media/2003/mr030417.html> and the full publication is at [http://www.arcpoh.adelaide.edu.au/publications/cdhs99\\_frame.html](http://www.arcpoh.adelaide.edu.au/publications/cdhs99_frame.html)

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Extract from ABC Health-Updates, April 24, 2003  
Health-Updates is a weekly alert about recent ABC health coverage now available online. Information on how to subscribe can be found at <http://www.abc.net.au/health/maillinglist.htm>

### FEATURE: KIDNEY COUNTRY

Mariah Swan was just 15 months old when her mother noticed something odd. Although her appetite was waning, she seemed to be getting bigger. But her growth did not look normal; her arms and legs were swelling. Tests showed Mariah was the youngest Indigenous person ever to be diagnosed with end-stage renal disease, or kidney failure: one of the most serious health threats facing Indigenous

Australians. The number of patients has quadrupled over the past 10 years, and the shortage of organ donors is exacerbating the problem.

<http://www.abc.net.au/health/regions/features/kidneycountry/default.htm>

#### NEW HEALTH LIBRARY TOPIC: INDIGENOUS HEALTH

Indigenous health stories and transcripts from across the ABC, plus selected links from other websites.

<http://www.abc.net.au/health/regions/library/indigenoushealth.htm>

#### CALLS FOR REFORM OF HEALTH SYSTEM (The World Today: 24/04/2003)

The Prime Minister has offered to increase spending on public hospitals by \$10 billion over five years, but only if the states match that spending. But some doctors and health economists say throwing more money at the problem is not enough and that fundamental reform of the system is required.

<http://www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/content/2003/s839506.htm>

<http://www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/content/2003/s838648.htm>

<http://www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2003/s838735.htm>

<http://www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2003/s838749.htm>

#### INDIGENOUS PEOPLE TO HAVE BETTER ACCESS TO FREE MEDICAL CARE (The World Today: 23/04/2003)

Rather than pouring all funding into expensive treatment of diseases prevalent in the Aboriginal population like kidney disease and diabetes, the Federal health department has just announced a scheme focusing on preventative health care. Many Aboriginal people do not even have a Medicare card, effectively excluding them from receiving free medical care and subsidised pharmaceuticals. But the Government has now designed a special form and will provide Centrelink assistance to Aboriginal people to apply for a Medicare card. <http://www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/content/2003/s838650.htm>

#### GOVERNMENT PLANNING MEDICARE OVERHAUL (PM: 22/04/2003)

A proposal to let private health insurance cover some GPs' bills has been attacked as inflationary and discriminatory. The Government is planning to announce an overhaul of the Medicare system soon. The changes are aimed at shoring up bulk-billing and increasing the number of doctors in rural and outer-metropolitan areas.

<http://www.abc.net.au/pm/content/2003/s837768.htm>

<http://www.abc.net.au/am/content/2003/s837309.htm>

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#### SEVENTH NATIONAL RURAL HEALTH CONFERENCE

A reminder about Seventh National Rural Health Conference websites.

The Program is at <http://www.nrha.net.au/nrhpublic/publicdocs/conferences/7thNRHC/program.htm>

The Communiqué and all recommendations are at

<http://www.nrha.net.au/nrhpublic/publicdocs/conferences/7thnrhc/communique.htm?>

ABC radio's coverage of the Conference can be seen and heard at:

<http://www.abc.net.au/rural/ruralhealth2003/stories/s798397.htm>

<http://www.abc.net.au/rural/ruralhealth2003/>

[http://www.abc.net.au/rural/ruralhealth2003/indexes/papers\\_default.htm](http://www.abc.net.au/rural/ruralhealth2003/indexes/papers_default.htm)

<http://www.abc.net.au/rural/telegraph/index/weekly.htm> - see Monday 3 March - the whole program was from the Conference

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CONTRIBUTION AND SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION AND DISCLAIMER

The NRHA e-forum is edited by a third party moderator, Jim Groves. Contributions are sought on any topic relevant to rural health concerns. Please send contributions to the moderator at grovesc@winshop.com.au or use the eforum contribution box at the NRHA website, <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au>

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.

This issue is going to 1,579 email addresses. Please forward a copy to any colleague you think may be interested.

To subscribe or unsubscribe, use the “sign up” box at <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au>. The archive of the newsletter is available at <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au> under “Publications & News”.