

National Rural Health Alliance E-forum 11 May 2007

In this issue:

- * The Lucky Country gets a little luckier
- * Other Budget News
- * "Syndrome X": Update on Metabolic Syndrome - LIVE satellite TV broadcast Tuesday 22nd May 2007
- * News from the Alliance
- * SBS TV to re-broadcast Rural Health Education Foundation programs in May
- * GP bulk-billing highs for children, aged and rural people - Abbott
- * Report finds 'positive outcomes' for Indigenous Australians
- * Rural Health on the Web
- * Rural Australia's "rusted on" young people
- * New articles in Rural and Remote Health
- * Cost and locality, barriers to proper asthma medication use - AIHW
- * Rural Focus for Indigenous Scholarship Winners
- * Rural Health on the ABC
- * Rural Doctors Have Their Say on How to Fix Rural Health Services - AMA Rural Health Issues Survey 2007
- * What's New in Regional Statistics
- * What's On
- * Contribution and subscription information and disclaimer
- * Full text of "The Lucky Country gets a little luckier"
- * Support for getting published in the Australian Journal of Rural Health

+++++

THE LUCKY COUNTRY GETS A LITTLE LUCKIER

Tonight's Budget has provided some good news for country people on health, particularly where oral and dental health is concerned, and particularly for NSW. Although the initiative does not go as far as the National Oral Health Alliance would like, the NRHA is pleased to see the Australian government providing much-needed investment again for dental health.

The full text of the Alliance statement is at

<http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/budget%202007%208%20may%20final.pdf>
and is reprinted below

+++++

OTHER BUDGET NEWS

The Budget includes new funding of \$274.5 million to improve the health services and equipment available to meet the health care needs of people living in rural and remote areas, according to Health Minister Tony Abbott. The announcement is at <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/budget/publishing.nsf/Content/budget2007-hmedia04.htm>

In relation to indigenous health, Tony Abbott has announced that annual funding for Indigenous health has increased by over \$270 million or by more than 170 per cent in real terms since 1996. Initiatives in the 2007-08 Budget include (details at <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/budget/publishing.nsf/Content/budget2007->

hmedia10.htm):

- * an extra \$38.2 million over four years to provide better access to health care for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander families and communities in rural and remote locations throughout Australia
- * new funding of \$37.4 million over four years to Health @ Home Plus, a nurse-led home visiting program for mothers and babies
- * new funding of \$36.9 million over four years to fund accreditation which will ensure Indigenous health services meet the same standards as mainstream health services
- * \$8.5 million over four years will be spent to convert approximately 120 positions held by Indigenous Australians in community-based Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander community care services into real jobs
- * Indigenous students will be encouraged to work in dental health through three \$15,000 scholarships per year under the expanded Puggy Hunter Memorial Scholarship Scheme.

Tony Abbott's other Budget announcements are at <http://www.health.gov.au>. The budget details from the Department of Health and Ageing are at <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/budget/publishing.nsf/Content/2007-2008-1>

The main Budget papers are available at <http://www.budget.gov.au/> and a statement on "Building a Stronger Future for Regional Australia" is at http://www.budget.gov.au/2007-08/ministerial/html/index_dotars.htm

Budget information from the Minister for Transport and Regional Services is at http://www.dotars.gov.au/department/statements/2007_2008/index.aspx

According to ALP health spokesperson Nicola Roxon, the health budget gets some things right - but there are big gaps. Her statement is at <http://www.alp.org.au/media/0507/mshea090.php>. Regional Development spokesperson Simon Crean said that the Budget will not secure the future of regional Australia. His statement is at <http://www.alp.org.au/media/0507/msrd090.php>

The Rural Doctors' Association said that rural health had been "forgotten" in the Budget and had been "been dropped like a hot potato". The Association has also expressed its concern that the Federal Government continues to ignore the need for a Rural Health Obligation in setting a defined minimum standard of access to local doctors, hospitals and health services in rural communities.

"We need a massive injection right now of new and continuing funding into rural healthcare, directed across a wide range of initiatives. Key among them should be the introduction through Medicare of rural-specific fee for service payments to compensate rural doctors for the professional and family isolation, and the increased skills and responsibility, of rural and remote practice. There must also be substantial funding allocated specifically in the next Australian Health Care Agreements between the federal and state governments to better support rural hospitals and health services." The full text of the RDAA statement is at http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded_documents/Rural%20health%20forgotten%20in%20Budget%202007%20--%20May%202007.pdf

The AMA was more positive, describing the budget as "Health Budget 2007 - A Budget of Downpayments: Little Steps Not Giant Leaps." AMA Vice President Dr Choong-Siew Yong said new funding for Indigenous health, aged care, combating obesity, rural health, dental care, chronic disease, and after-hours GP services, was welcome - but well short of what is needed to make a real difference. "The priorities are right but the funding falls short," Dr Yong said. The AMA statement is at <http://www.ama.com.au/web.nsf/doc/WEEN-72ZCL5>

The Australian General Practice Network generally welcomed the budget, particularly the funding for rural mental health. Its budget analysis is at http://www.agpn.com.au/client_images/104183.pdf and its media statements on the Budget at <http://www.agpn.com.au>

The Pharmacy Guild's analysis is at http://beta.guild.org.au/uploadedfiles/National/What's_New/National%20Budget%20Brief%202007.pdf

+++++

"Syndrome X": Update on Metabolic Syndrome - LIVE satellite TV broadcast Tuesday 22nd May 2007 (repeated Friday 25th May 12:30pm EST)

Produced by the Rural Health Education Foundation Funded by Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing In April 2005 the International Diabetes Federation (IDF) developed and published a consensus worldwide definition of metabolic syndrome. It is defined as central obesity in concurrence with any two of the following factors: raised triglycerides, reduced HDL cholesterol, raised blood pressure or raised fasting plasma glucose. This program discusses the changes made to the definition and the implications of these changes for both practitioners and patients. Key areas discussed in the program include prevention, treatment and management of metabolic syndrome in both Indigenous and non-Indigenous Australians. Program information can be found by clicking <http://www.rhef.com.au/programs/706/706.html> Contact: Rural Health Education Foundation via email rhef@rhef.com.au or telephone (02) 6232-5480.

+++++

NEWS FROM THE ALLIANCE

9th National Rural Health Conference

Thank you to everyone who attended the 9th National Rural Health Conference in Albury in March and also to those who couldn't make it but remain interested in the health and well-being of people living in rural and remote Australia.

The Conference Communique and Recommendations have been widely circulated and are available on our website at <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au>. Please be assured that the Alliance will continue to work on those recommendations it can and we hope that you will also work towards any of the recommendations that are relevant to your area of work.

There has already been significant action on four of the priority recommendations - those relating to the patients' accommodation and travel schemes, "*Healthy Horizons*", the Government's funding of housing in remote Indigenous communities, and Indigenous health.

Patient Assisted Travel Schemes (Priority Recommendation 14)

On 28 March 2007 the Senate agreed that the following matter be referred to the Community Affairs Committee for inquiry and report by 20 September 2007.

The operation and effectiveness of Patient Assisted Travel Schemes including:

- a. the need for greater national consistency and uniformity of Patient Assisted Travel Schemes across jurisdictions, especially the procedures used to determine eligibility for travel schemes covering patients, their carers, escorts and families; the level and forms of assistance provided; and reciprocal arrangements for inter-state patients and their carers
- b. the need for national minimum standards to improve flexibility for rural patient access to specialist health services throughout Australia
- c. the extent to which local and cross-border issues are compromising the effectiveness of existing Patient Assisted Travel Schemes in Australia, in terms of patient and health system outcomes
- d. the current level of utilisation of schemes and identification of mechanisms to ensure that schemes are effectively marketed to all eligible patients and monitored to inform continuous improvement
- e. variations in patient outcomes between metropolitan and rural, regional and remote patients and the extent to which improved travel and accommodation support would reduce these inequalities
- f. the benefit to patients in having access to a specialist who has the support of a multidisciplinary team and the option to seek a second opinion
- g. the relationship between initiatives in e Health and Patient Assisted Travel Schemes
- h. the feasibility and desirability of extending patient assisted travel schemes to all treatments listed on the Medicare Benefits Schedule - Enhanced Primary Care items such as allied health and dental treatment and fitting of artificial limbs
- i. the role of charity and non-profit organisations in the provision of travel and accommodation assistance to patients.

Written submissions close on 25 May 2007 and should be addressed to: The Secretary, Senate Community Affairs Committee, PO Box 6100, Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600

The Alliance will be making a Submission to the Inquiry and encourages others to do the same.

Healthy Horizons (Priority Recommendation 8): The Alliance has this week received a letter from Michael Tennant, Chair of the Rural Health Standing Committee, comprised of rural health officers from the Commonwealth, States and Territories.

Mr Tennant's reply is in response to the Alliance's letter of 5 April 2007 about the 9th Conference recommendations. Mr Tennant notes Conference's endorsement of the need for a successor to the National Strategic Framework "*Healthy Horizons*" and reports that the Rural Health Standing Committee is keen to undertake a review of *Healthy Horizons* and develop a new national strategic framework in consultation with the National Rural Health Alliance. The Alliance will meet with the Rural Health Standing Committee and begin work on a new framework to replace "*Healthy Horizons*" soon. Mr Tennant also indicates that the Committee will begin considering other recommendations when it next meets.

Community Housing Infrastructure Program (Priority Recommendation 5): The Alliance has received a letter from the Minister for Families, Community Services and Indigenous Affairs about the Government's approach to housing in remote Indigenous communities. The letter states in part: "...The Australian Government is not proposing to stop

building public housing in remote Indigenous communities. It is, in fact, expanding its activity in this area. It is crucial, however, where public money is invested in building homes, that these locations are viable for residents and have law and order protection, access to health services and schools. A traditional lifestyle with no choice but to be uneducated, on welfare and unsafe is not a desirable outcome.

The review of CHIP, conducted by PricewaterhouseCoopers, involved consultations with key players in the provision of housing for Indigenous people. It found current Indigenous housing arrangements were flawed and unsustainable. It provided a sober analysis of the situation and proposed a new way forward.

The Australian Government is now considering the recommendations of the review. The review recommends focusing a new replacement to CHIP for remote and very remote Indigenous communities where the housing need is greatest as well as making sure that people living in areas with mainstream alternatives have fair access to those alternatives."

Indigenous Health (Priority Recommendation 4):

Readers will be aware of the launch in Sydney during April of the '*Close the Gap*' campaign led by Commissioner Tom Calma, NACCHO, Oxfam and numerous other organisations. The NRHA is supporting the campaign and is working on an action plan for Indigenous health for the rural and remote health sector, begun at the pre-Conference workshop in Albury (<http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/seminars/?IntCatId=18>).

The NRHA is also working in the Australian Health Care Reform Alliance on a Summit on Health Reform to be held in Canberra 30-31 July 2007. One of the key issues to be dealt with at this Summit is how a reformed health system would support the drive for equal health for Indigenous people within a generation (<http://www.healthreform.org.au>).

Conference Proceedings and friends of the Alliance

The Alliance is finalising the uploading of papers from the Conference onto its website. To view the papers go to: <http://9thnrhc.ruralhealth.org.au/?IntContId=38> and then to 'Program and Papers'. The papers are linked to the program so you will need to scroll down the program until you find the paper you're after.

There is also a page on our website where you can hear and view the keynote presentations. This page is at <http://9thnrhc.ruralhealth.org.au/keynotes/?IntCatId=15> and papers and presentations will be added as they become available.

The full proceedings are being produced on the Alliance's updated 'Rural and Remote Health Papers 1991 - 2007' CD which will be out by June. Conference delegates will be sent the CD free of charge. The CD is also free to members of *friends* of the Alliance. So if you couldn't make the Conference and would like a copy just download a *friends* membership form from the *friends* page on the Alliance's website and join *friends* (<http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/friends/?IntCatId=4>).

Evaluation

We were very pleased to receive 430 completed evaluation forms at the Conference - thanks to everyone who completed one. Responses are being analysed through Urbis Keys Yuong and we will provide you with a summary next time. Two things are already clear: delegates loved the arts-in-health stream and admired Julie McCrossin, the MC.

Please keep in touch with the Alliance and continue to keep us informed about what's happening in rural and remote Australia.

Leanne Coleman
Office Manager, NRHA
Phone: 02 6285 4660

A message from John Menadue: Centre for Policy Development: Help support better health, and better living

Most of you will be familiar with the vast range of policy issues facing regional and rural communities. Health is such a critical aspect of our lives - whether at a personal or professional level, we all know the major impacts on individuals, families and their communities when our health suffers.

At the conference, I spoke of our need for universal health care. More than any other group, rural and remote Australians depend on high-quality universal care, and just as importantly they need serious reform of current health policy - we need more resources applied to health education and prevention, and local primary health care.

A clear agenda: *The isolation of rural communities and the people who live in them makes it essential that we set smarter health policies to:*

- * increase education, prevention, primary care & resilience; and*
- * decrease the incidence and severity of sickness, disease and chronic conditions.*

It isn't rocket science, and the dividends of reform are enormous - however health policy is saddled with political intransigence, and occasional flashes of short-term opportunism.

The Centre for Policy Development (formerly the New Matilda Policy Portal) has developed a comprehensive health policy platform, "A health policy for Australia: reclaiming universal health care." To visit the site go to:

<http://www.newmatilda.com/page/default.asp?PageID=53>

We will also shortly publish health policy statements on: primary care; workforce reform; and community engagement.

+++++

9TH NATIONAL RURAL HEALTH CONFERENCE

The National Rural Health Alliance has published on its website (<http://9thnrhc.ruralhealth.org.au/registration/?IntCatId=2>) the full set of 250 recommendations from delegates at the 9th National Rural Health Conference held in Albury in March.

Media Statements from the Conference are as follows:

- * From the 9th Conference: plans for rural and remote health - http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/9th%20conf_plans%20for%20rr%20health%2015%20march.pdf*
- * 9th Conference: the rural health sector recommits to action - <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/conference%20media%20with%20communique%20and%20recs%2015%20march.pdf>*
- * Good health - not just about giving up smoking and taking up exercise - http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/good%20health%20_%20smoking%20and%20exercise.pdf*
- * Top Performers in Rural Health Care Honoured - <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/top%20rural%20health%20performers%20%20honoured.pdf>*
- * Grumpy old men perform secret men's business - and more - in Men's Sheds -*

<http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/grumpy%20old%20men.pdf>

* Country Australians deserve an equal share in Australia's wealth -

<http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/8%20march%20country%20australians%20deserve%20equal%20share.pdf>

* Health Reform, Health Professionals and Service Planning -

<http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/070307%20health%20reform%20health%20professionals%20day%202%20%207%20march%20071.pdf>

* Rural Health - It's All Happening in Albury at opening of 9th National Rural Health Conference -

<http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/070307%20media%20notification%207%200%20march%20nrh%20conference.pdf>

+++++

Manuscript submissions to The Australian Journal of Rural Health can now be made online through Manuscript Central. Easy and fast submission process; track the progress of your article at any time; safe and secure site. Simply log on to

<http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/ajrh> to submit your manuscript today and share the wealth of your knowledge. Full author instructions and guidelines can be found at the AJRH homepage - <http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/ajr>

The April 2007 issue of the journal is available online now at <http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/links/toc/ajr>. This is a special thematic issue on mental health, with a particular focus on the provision of services in rural and remote Australia relating to the prevention and management of mental health issues. Articles include:

* The cost of change on the land

* headspace: National Youth Mental Health Foundation: Making headway with rural young people and their mental health

* Internet-based mental health programs: A powerful tool in the rural medical kit

* Disadvantage and discontent: A review of issues relevant to the mental health of rural and remote Indigenous Australians

* Securing and retaining a mental health workforce in Far Western New South Wales

* Use of social network analysis to describe service links for farmers' mental health

* Evaluation of a stress management course in adult education centres in rural Australia

* Prevalence of psychological distress, anxiety and depression in rural communities in Australia

* Natural disasters, climate change and mental health considerations for rural Australia

* Challenges faced by general practitioners and allied mental health services in providing mental health services in rural Queensland

* Mental health issues and resources in rural and regional communities: An exploration of perceptions of service providers

Grazing

* From the Journal Associates

* Book Review

+++++

From: Michelle Lindsay

Subject: SBS TV to re-broadcast Rural Health Education Foundation programs in May

Beginning Thursday 17 May, SBS Television will re-broadcast three Rural Health Education Foundation documentary programs on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples' health issues.

The programs - Start Strong, Grow Strong and Keep Safe - were initially broadcast by SBS in November 2006. "We're delighted that the November broadcasts proved popular enough for SBS to schedule more screenings," said Don Perlgut, CEO of the Rural Health Education Foundation. "National free-to-air television exposure broadens our educational program distribution substantially, and further enables the Foundation to fulfil its mission to improve health care in rural and remote Australia."

SBS Television will re-broadcast these programs on their national free-to-air network on the following dates:

Start Strong <http://www.rhef.com.au/programs/607a/607a.html> (Thursday 17th May 3.30pm) - preventing injuries in Aboriginal communities

Grow Strong <http://www.rhef.com.au/programs/607b/607b.html> (Thursday 24th May 3.30pm) - Aboriginal maternal and infant care

Keep Safe <http://www.rhef.com.au/programs/606/606.html> (Thursday 31st May 3.30pm) - Aboriginal early childhood development

Each program is 26 minutes long, and is presented by Karla Grant of SBS TV Living Black program.

+++++

Join friends of the Alliance in 2007. By joining friends you will receive the updated CD 'Rural and Remote Health Papers 1991-2007', a 2007 friends certificate, regular issues of PARTYline newsletter, and be eligible for a discounted registration at the 9th National Rural Health Conference to be held in Albury next month. Membership of friends would also give you the opportunity to be involved more closely with the Alliance's information dissemination and policy work. You will become part of a group of people who contribute to and support the work of the National Rural Health Alliance.

+++++

MACHINE INJURY SERIES

The Joint Venture in Farm Health and Safety, partnered by RIRDC, GRDC, MLA, AWI, CRDC, SRDC and RIRDC, has compiled a series of reports on machine-related on-farm injuries. Injury on farms and its prevention are key issues for Australian agricultural and horticultural industries with the common causes of farm injury well documented in reports and papers. This series of in-depth investigations deals with preventable risk factors associated with operation of specific items of farm machinery. More information at <http://promomail.adrenalinmedia.com.au/ch/bfhkh6/208248/0d6782672.html>.

+++++

PARTYline Newsletter

The Alliance's newsletter, PARTYline, is a means of exchanging information between those

with an interest in rural health, including friends of the Alliance, health consumers, health professionals, students and policy makers. Contributors report on their personal rural experiences, on programs with which they have been involved, provide information on new initiatives and resources, and it is a vehicle for opinions on rural health issues and events.

PARTYline has a print circulation around Australia of 13,000 and is also available on-line below. PARTYline readily accepts contributions from readers - articles (up to 500 words) and photographs can be sent to partyline@ruralhealth.org.au

Latest Issue: Number 29, March 2007

In This Issue

- * the urgency of dental workforce shortages
- * evaluation of the Rural Health Strategy
- * the new viability supplement for rural aged care
- * the new Rural Allied Health Undergraduate Scholarships, including interviews with two of the first round recipients
- * day-to-day living amid the Victorian bushfires
- * the award winning Naiyu 'Swim for Life' project
- * rural and remote workforce promotion
- * closure of Bourke pre-school
- * the Australian Health Care Reform Alliance Summit in July
- * a lift-out describing aspects of the NRHA's Budget Submission
- * program information for the 9th National Rural Health Conference in Albury (7-10 March), and
- * reader's photos on the theme "Country kids having fun".

+++++

GP BULK-BILLING HIGHS FOR CHILDREN, AGED AND RURAL PEOPLE - ABBOTT

Record bulk-billing rates for GP attendances were achieved for children, people aged over 65 years and for rural and remote area people in the March quarter of 2007. Statistics for the quarter show GP bulk-billing has increased to 77.4 per cent, an increase for the 13th consecutive quarter. The GP bulk-billing rates for children increased to a record 84.9 per cent. For people aged over 65 years, the rate increased to a record 87.3 per cent. The rate in rural and remote areas increased to a record 72.6 per cent. The full text of Health Minister's Tony Abbott is at <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/ministers/publishing.nsf/Content/mr-yr07-ta-abb049.htm> and all bulk-billing data is available at <http://www.health.gov.au/medicarestats> or <http://www.medicareaustralia.gov.au>

+++++

LIFELINE'S JUST ASK - 1 300 13 11 14

Your Rural Mental Health Information Service

Lifeline's Just ask is a rural mental health information service. Information provided includes: referral to services and web sites, printed material and a range of self help resources. The self-help resources focus on practical steps to help promote mental health in a range of areas. For information and copies of resources call or visit <http://www.justask.org.au> and further information is available at national@lifeline.org.au and <http://www.lifeline.org.au>

+++++

REPORT FINDS "POSITIVE OUTCOMES" FOR INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS

The Australian Government has welcomed a report evaluating four programs to improve the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal Australians.

The evaluation was conducted by consultants Urbis Keys Young. It covers the Bringing Them Home Counsellors, Link Up Services and two other programs aimed at improving the social and emotional wellbeing of Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander people. The evaluation found that these social and mental health programs have provided services to a large number of Aboriginal people nationally in a culturally appropriate way.

The full text of Health Minister Tony Abbott's statement is at <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/ministers/publishing.nsf/Content/mr-yr07-ta-abb048.htm> and a copy of the report can be found at <http://www.health.gov.au/bringingthemhome>

+++++

RURAL HEALTH ON THE WEB

(From Google Alert, <http://www.googlealert.com>)

+++++

RURAL AUSTRALIA'S "RUSTED ON" YOUNG PEOPLE

(Extract from Farmonline, http://www.farmonline.com.au/news_daily.asp?ag_id=42202 - free subscription is required)

Outback Australia isn't about to lose many of its young people judging by their responses to a survey conducted as part of the Year of the Outback 2006 celebrations. The results published in a new report, "Outback Youth Infront, Their Voice - Australia's Future" can now be downloaded from the Outback Development Consortium's website (<http://www.outbackinfront.com>) or <http://www.yarn.gov.au>.

The key findings of the report were:

- * Most participants imagined they would still be living in regional and rural Australia in the next 10-20 years;
- * Participants noted there were many advantages to living in rural and regional Australia with lifestyle and community stated as the best aspects;
- * The top three issues identified as important to young people were employment, community and education.

Among the report's recommendations were better professional development opportunities for young outback dwellers; wider promotion of jobs available; and attracting and retaining medical professionals to regional Australia; information packs for organisations on how to run successful training programs; the creation a job database for the local area; more social and professional networks and interaction opportunities for young people.

+++++

NEW ARTICLES IN RURAL AND REMOTE HEALTH

'Bringing rural nurses, midwives & rural communities closer together: eliminating the isolation barrier through technology '

Interested in how technology can overcome the tyranny of distance? See what's happening in New Zealand.

<http://www.rrh.org.au/articles/showarticlenew.asp?ArticleID=702>

'Oral health comparisons between children attending an Aboriginal health service and a Government school dental service in a regional location'

Dental caries is an important cause and indicator of poor health. This article provides the first data on the difference in prevalence of this condition in Indigenous and non-Indigenous children in a rural South Australian centre.

<http://www.rrh.org.au/articles/showarticlenew.asp?ArticleID=625>

'A student view of the difference between general practice and rural and remote medicine'

Is rural medical practice different to the way city GPs practice? This article provides clear insights from medical students who have observed both.

<http://www.rrh.org.au/articles/showarticlenew.asp?ArticleID=641>

'Clinical training in the Top End: impact of the Northern Territory Clinical School, Australia, on the Territory's health workforce'

The Northern Territory Clinical School based in Darwin is now 10 years old and was precursor to more recently developed Rural Clinical Schools. This paper shows promising evidence that clearly supports the link between rural clinical training and a desire to work rurally. It also demonstrates that graduates from the RCS program need to have the opportunity to work as Interns rurally if the Rural Clinical Schools are going to improve the rural medical workforce in the long term.

<http://www.rrh.org.au/articles/showarticlenew.asp?ArticleID=723>

+++++

COST AND LOCALITY, BARRIERS TO PROPER ASTHMA MEDICATION USE - AIHW

A report by the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare, " Patterns of asthma medication use in Australia", suggests that some asthma medications are not being used in the optimal way by most people.

Although asthma is as common in remote areas as it is in cities, the report showed that people living in remote areas use asthma medications less than people living in cities.

It also found that people with concession cards, who are able to buy medications at a cheaper rate, used more inhaled corticosteroids than those without a concession card. This implies that the full price charged to general patients for inhaled corticosteroids may be a barrier to their regular use.

The AIHW statement is at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/mediacentre/2007/mr20070509.cfm> and

the full report at <http://www.aihw.gov.au/publications/index.cfm/title/10356>

+++++

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.bushcrisisline.org.au>

+++++

RURAL FOCUS FOR INDIGENOUS SCHOLARSHIP WINNERS

Two medical students, both with a passion for rural medicine, have been awarded the AMA Indigenous Peoples' Medical Scholarships for 2007. AMA president, Dr Mukesh Haikerwal, awarded the scholarships to Ms Shelly Fraser of James Cook University and Ms Sarah Dunn from the University of New South Wales. Valued at \$9,000 each for each year of study, the scholarships provide support for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander students studying medicine. The full text of the AMA statement is at <http://www.ama.com.au/web.nsf/doc/WEEN-72S2DG>

+++++

RURAL HEALTH ON THE ABC

(From ABC Rural Newsletter, <http://www.abc.net.au/rural/default.htm> and Health Updates, <http://www.abc.net.au/health/maillinglist.htm>)

Underlying history a factor in Indigenous health: academic
The co-author of a report to the World Health Organisation (WHO) says acknowledging the wrongs done to Aboriginal people would significantly improve their health.
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200704/s1909772.htm>

BUSH DOCTORS AT BREAKING POINT (AM: 02/05/2007)
<http://www.abc.net.au/am/content/2007/s1912028.htm>

HEALTH REPORT: The 'thrifty gene' hypothesis and Indigenous health
Monday 7 May, 8.30am, Radio National
Thirty years ago geneticists came up with the 'thrifty gene' hypothesis - that high rates of diabetes and obesity in Indigenous populations could be explained by a gene specific to these groups. New research suggests otherwise.
<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/healthreport/>

Rural doctors push for Medicare reforms
The Rural Doctors Association (RDA) wants special Medicare fees to better compensate country doctors.
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200705/s1915736.htm>

Land work improves Aborigines' health: study

A three-year Northern Territory study has seen improvements in the health of Aboriginal people who are employed to look after land.
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/newsitems/200705/s1917718.htm>

THE 'THRIFTY GENE' HYPOTHESIS AND INDIGENOUS HEALTH (Health Report: 07/05/2007)

Thirty years ago geneticists came up with the 'thrifty gene' hypothesis - the idea that high rates of diabetes and obesity in Indigenous populations could be explained by a gene specific to these groups. A new study dispels the 'thrifty gene' hypothesis, suggesting that high rates of these chronic diseases are rooted in social disadvantage, rather than a genetic pre-disposition. But not everybody agrees with the study.
<http://www.abc.net.au/rn/healthreport/stories/2007/1913092.htm>

+++++

RURAL DOCTORS HAVE THEIR SAY ON HOW TO FIX RURAL HEALTH SERVICES - AMA RURAL HEALTH ISSUES SURVEY 2007

Better resources for rural hospitals and consistent national assessment for overseas trained doctors (OTDs) were the two most pressing issues identified by rural doctors in a groundbreaking new national survey released today by the AMA. AMA President, Dr Mukesh Haikerwal, said that the AMA's Rural Health Issues Survey provides policymakers with a clear action plan for better rural health care.

"Hospital closures, outdated equipment, long working hours, a continuing reliance on OTDs, and insufficient funding are all issues that were raised by the survey respondents again and again," Dr Haikerwal said.

The full text of the AMA statement is at <http://www.ama.com.au/web.nsf/doc/WEEN-72T6R7>

The Rural Doctors' Association response, that the "AMA supports RDAA's lobbying - at last" is at

http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded_documents/AMA%20supports%20RDAA's%20lobbying,%20at%20last%20--%20May%202007.pdf

+++++

WHAT'S NEW IN REGIONAL STATISTICS

(ABS 1379.0, released 30 April 2007, available at <http://www.abs.gov.au/AUSSTATS/abs@.nsf/ProductsbyCatalogue/3D0F0879CA652A30CA2572CA0015D274?OpenDocument>)

Contents:

- Welcome from the Director
- The Information Development Plan for Rural and Regional Statistics
- Regional Wages and Salaries
- Rural and Regional Statistics Advisory Group
- National Regional Profile
- New Developments in Geocoding

2006 Census Products
Regional Population Growth
Natural Resource Management
Tourist Accommodation
Measuring Agricultural Production
Regional Water Use
Measuring the Population Effects of Cyclone Larry
Free Statistics and Training
Recent and Upcoming Releases
Perspectives on Regional Australia Publication Series
Contact Us

+++++

From: Relate Human Services
Subject: ACCFPP Conference 2007

You are invited to attend the second national conference for the Australian College for Child and Family Protection Practitioners in Melbourne - 19 to 21 May 2007 at the Victoria Hotel, Little Collins Street.

The conference theme "Borders and Bridges" reflects the broad contexts of Australian child and family practice. Diverse state data collection systems and differences in risk and safety assessment supply the foundation of a lack of systematic planning. Workforce roles are similar but skills and qualifications are not truly comparable. Different levels of non-government and government services across the three tiers of government add to the complexity. The ACCFPP aims to build bridges between agencies and professions to minimise the impacts of poverty and mental illness on Australian families and children.

The Conference secretariat is based at the Mackay Offices of Relate Human Services, PO Box 1401, Mackay 4740, Phone 07-49575400 Fax 07-49575488 email: accfpp@bigpond.net.au
<http://www.relatehumanservices.com.au>

+++++

From: Alan Staines <alanstaines@optusnet.com.au>
Subject: Inaugural Australian Postvention Conference, USNW - Sydney, Thursday 24th-26th May

The Inaugural Australian Postvention Conference is being held at the USNW - Sydney, Thursday 24th-26th May. Details of the Conference program with registration and a call for abstracts are listed on our website at <http://www.hotelnetwork.com.au/conferences/conferences#postventionconference>. An email can be sent to postvention@hotelnetwork.com.au

Invited presenters who are all experts in the field include Dr Frank Campbell (USA), Dr Adrian Hill (Canada), Prof Annette Beautrais (New Zealand), Dr Karl Andriessen (Belgium) and Michelle Linn-Gust (USA). Australian presenters include Dr Sheila Clark, Dr Judith Murray, Chief Inspector Gary Raymond and Professor Peter Bycroft.

+++++

From: Gordon Gregory
Subject: Tell the Senate Inquiry about Patients Assistance and Travel Schemes (PATS)

Don't forget there is now the opportunity to tell the Senate Inquiry your views, and those of your organisation, about the patients' accommodation and travel schemes. You will agree, I think, that these schemes should not be viewed as discretionary extras, but as the only means by which people in more remote areas can get fair access to specialist services not available to them face-to-face locally.

So tell the Senate your stories, give them evidence, case-studies, policy views -by 25 May.

The Alliance is of course making a submission and our October 2005 paper on PATS can be found in the Publications section (go to Position Papers) on our website (<http://www.ruralhealth.org.au>)

Submissions should be with Elton Humphery, Committee Secretary, by 25 May 2007. The Committee prefers to receive submissions electronically as an attached document - email: community.affairs.sen@aph.gov.au - or by hard copy to PO Box 6100 Parliament House, Canberra ACT 2600

The terms of reference for the inquiry are attached available on the Internet at http://www.aph.gov.au/senate_ca

+++++

From: Kelli Dopson <kdopson@healthworkforce.com.au>
Subject: 18th Annual RDAQ Conference: Shifting Sands, Changing Tides: the next generation

18th Annual RDAQ Conference: Shifting Sands, Changing Tides: the next generation
7-10 June 2007, Rydges Capricorn Resort, Yeppoon

Join us on the Capricorn Coast for the Rural Doctors Association of Queensland Conference to develop your skills and have your say on the future of rural health. Topics include Workforce solutions, Maternity services, Medico-political forum, Indigenous women's health, Mental health, Barriers facing IMGs, Cardiology, Toxicology, Musculoskeletal medicine, Acute behavioural emergencies, and much much more.

REGISTER NOW for discounted rates!
For program and registration details visit <http://www.rdaq.com.au/conference> or call 07 3105 7800

Kelli Dopson
Event Manager RDAQ Conference 2007
Tel: 07 3105 7800 Fax: 07 3105 7801
kdopson@healthworkforce.com.au
<http://www.rdaq.com.au>

GPO Box 2523, Brisbane, Qld 4001

+++++

AHCRA National Health Reform Summit 2007

The Australian Health Care Reform Alliance is holding a National Health Reform Summit **'Reform in the Australian Health Sector'** on 30-31 July 2007 in Canberra. Program and online registration are available at <http://www.healthreform.org.au/>.

+++++

From: Joy Burch

Subject: FW: 2007 Mount Isa Remote Health Conference 24-26 August 2007 - Call For Abstracts

Every two years Mount Isa hosts a conference aimed at bringing together people with an interest in all aspects of health in remote Australia. Previous events in 2003 and 2005 were immensely successful with attendees finding the presentations 'focussed and relevant' and many going on to indicate their willingness to attend again.

The purpose of this year's event is to provide a forum for information exchange and debate about issues relevant to remote health with a particular focus on the following themes:

- * Clinical practice in remote areas;
- * Population Health including Indigenous health;
- * Workforce supply, education and training;
- * Research outcomes such as innovation in health service delivery.

This conference is convened by the Mount Isa Centre for Rural and Remote Health in collaboration with a range of stakeholders including, Queensland Health, the Royal Flying Doctors Service, James Cook University, Oxfam, North and West Queensland Primary Health Care and the Mount Isa City Council. Through involvement of such a wide range of remote health organisations the multidisciplinary nature of this conference is assured.

Once again the Mount Isa Remote Health Conference promises to be a fantastic event and, through its small size and limited registrations, represents a great opportunity to establish networks with other remote health professionals.

Details are available at <http://micrrh.jcu.edu.au/conferences-workshops/remotely-interested/>

Abstracts close 8 June 2007

Joy Burch
Executive Officer
Australian Rural Health Education Network
PO Box 242 Deakin West. ACT 2600
Phone: 02 6282 2166
Mobile: 0419 460 820
Fax: 02 6282 9166
email: joy.burch@arhen.org.au

web: <http://www.arhen.org.au>
journal: <http://www.rrh.org.au>

+++++

From: Nicky Reavell
Subject: 9th Australian Palliative Care Conference

Partners Across the Lifespan

Palliative Care Victoria in conjunction with Palliative Care Australia is hosting the 9th Australian Palliative Care Conference. It will take place at the Melbourne Convention Centre, Victoria Australia from Tuesday 28 to Friday 31 August 2007.

The conference website is <http://www.iceaustralia.com/apcc2007>

Palliative Care Australia
PO Box 24
Deakin West ACT 2600
Ph: +61 2 6232 4433
Fax: +61 2 6232 4434
<http://www.pallcare.org.au>

+++++

From: Michael Blair
Subject: Australian College of Mental Health Nurses 33rd Annual International Conference

The Australian College of Mental Health Nurses is to hold its 33rd Annual Conference in Cairns in 2007.

The theme for the conference, "Mental Health Nurses: Making Waves", not only illustrates the tropical location of the 2007 conference, it is also intended to reflect the idea that historically derived factors influencing development in Mental Health Nursing, reach out and influence others with related concerns.

Waves convey ideas of movement and change. History evolves as events change. Its influence on the future changes with developments that are based on the lessons learnt and experienced. As a wave rolls through, its predecessor is completely changed and yet waves are comprised of those that have come before. Our theme challenges presenters to address related topics. We know that mental health issues will remain important to communities and individuals in the years and decades to come. Mental health nursing is challenged to make waves and to be a key player in this expanding sphere.

The ACMHN Inc., through its national Conferences, local seminars, educational functions, scholarships and awards, has enjoyed a long and productive relationship with key sponsors. We hope that existing sponsors will take this opportunity to continue a mutually rewarding relationship, and that new groups will be inspired to join us.

The Web site URL for persons to express an interest in attending or sponsoring the

conference is <http://www.astmanagement.com.au/anzcmhc7/>

All those persons that express an interest in attending via the web site will go into the draw for a free registration to the conference.

The conference will be held at the International Hotel in Cairns from the 8th to the 12th of October 2007.

For further information contact:

Mick Blair

Co-convenor

ACMHN Inc. 33rd International Conference 2007

+++++

From: Scott Wagner

Subject: NSW Rural Allied Health Conference 2007, Dubbo, October 18-19

Details are at <http://www.nswrahc.com>. The call for abstracts is now open. Feel free to contact me to discuss.

+++++

From: Kate Morrison sjp@unsw.edu.au

Subject: Anti-Poverty Week

The main aim of Anti-Poverty Week (14th - 20th October) is to raise awareness of poverty and hardship around the world and within Australia.

Poverty and severe hardship affect more than a million Australians. Around the world more than a billion people are desperately poor. In Anti-Poverty Week help fight poverty and hardship.

Why not organise a display, stall or award? Maybe a workshop, lecture or forum? How about a fundraiser, fact sheet or petition? For more information and ideas, visit <http://www.antipovertyweek.org.au>, email apw@antipovertyweek.org.au or call 1300 797 290.

Kate Morrison

National Coordinator

Anti-Poverty Week 2007

1300-797-290

apw@antipovertyweek.org.au

<http://www.antipovertyweek.org.au>

+++++

From: Mcalpin, Susan

Subject: International Rural Network World Rural Forum

The International Rural Network World Rural Forum, India, Late Jan-Early Feb 2008: Innovation for Sustainable Local Development.

The main focus of the Forum will be on innovation in education, health, resource management, governance, and sustainable development to improve the quality of life of rural people and reduce rural poverty and social exclusion.

The forum will be based in the beautiful rural town of Udaipur, Rajasthan, which is also the home of IRN Board Member Lakshmi Murthy.

The Forum will involve five days, with at least one day (or equivalent) in local field visits to see the relevant work of NGOs etc. There are likely to be optional additional visits after the Forum either to the famous Institute of Rural Management in Anand, Gujarat and/or to the equally famous Birla Institute of Technology in Pilani, Rajasthan.

The date of the conference will be around the end of January or beginning of February 2008. If you are interested, please check out our website at <http://www.International-Rural-Network.org> and email Nicola.swan@btinternet.com to register your interest in keeping informed as soon as possible.

Poverty and disadvantage is a common feature of rural areas and people across the world. This is explicitly recognised in the UN Millennium Development Goals. By providing a global forum for academics, practitioners, NGOs and policy makers concerned with sustainable rural development, education and health, the IRN aims to stimulate exchange of knowledge, experience and ideas, and create regional and global support networks. In this way it helps to develop a storehouse of knowledge and expertise on rural concerns, and to raise the profile and policy impacts of rural people, their NGOs and other organisations aiming for local empowerment, engagement, and supporting activities including policies.

+++++

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 (do not "reply" to this email - send contributions to grovesc@winshop.com.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

Please forward a copy to any colleague you think may be interested.

+++++

Media Release 8 May 2007

The Lucky Country gets a little luckier

Tonight's Budget has provided some good news for country people on health, particularly where oral and dental health is concerned, and particularly for NSW. Although the initiative does not go as far as the National Oral Health Alliance would like, the NRHA is pleased to see the Australian government providing much-needed investment again for dental health.

The NRHA is pleased that there will be a new dental school in rural New South Wales at the campuses of Charles Sturt University (CSU). The training model that CSU intends to put in place will not only lead to greater numbers of dentists and oral hygienists in the medium term but, from 2009, will also provide more dental services to Orange, Wagga Wagga, Albury, Bathurst and Dubbo. Another positive will be additional rural placements for metropolitan students of dentistry.

"This is a model that the NRHA would like to see adopted in other states where there are already some universities in rural regions and others with existing capacity to work in rural areas," according to Gordon Gregory, Executive Director of the NRHA.

The extra money for dental services through the Enhanced Primary Care system is welcome, although it is a problem for some that the GP is still the gatekeeper for the scheme. The shortage of dentists in rural areas is more extreme than the shortage of doctors, so in some areas it will remain impossible for GPs to refer to local dentists.

As a nation we have fallen so far behind with the state of our oral and dental health that there will remain a considerable unmet need for oral and dental health services. The government estimates that 200,000 people will benefit from this expanded dental care program over four years. But there are an estimated 650,000 people on waiting lists for public dental services so tonight's announcement will not be enough. The NRHA hopes the Australian government will continue to monitor developments in the area with their State and Territory colleagues to ensure genuine improvement and avoid cost shifting.

The Alliance notes three additional Puggy Hunter scholarships for students of dentistry, but overall it is very disappointed with the package of new initiatives for Indigenous health. "To close the gap and have equal health for Indigenous peoples within a generation will take bold whole-of-government initiatives and a focus on the economic and cultural determinants of poor health," John Wakerman, Chairperson of the NRHA, said tonight from Walgett.

"We're pleased with the support for the RFDS and the Rural Clinical School at Wollongong. There will also be help for drought-affected communities through more mental health nurses and allied health workers. But I'm a bit disappointed for rural and remote health overall. For instance, the announcement of additional funds for a number of elite research institutions appears to do nothing for health research on rural and remote issues and in rural areas," Dr Wakerman said.

+++++

Media Release 30 April 2007

Support for getting published in the Australian Journal of Rural Health

Have you ever wanted to get an article published in a refereed journal and wondered what the trick is?

If so, there is useful information and support for you on the website and on a special new CD ROM from the National Rural Health Alliance.

The material is from a Writing for Publication Seminar held by the Australian Journal of Rural Health in conjunction with the 9th National Rural Health Conference in Albury in March.

Topics covered include the principles of good writing; preparing a scientific paper; specific tips for getting published in the Australian Journal of Rural Health; and how on-line submission of manuscripts works for authors and referees.

You can listen to the audio stream of the papers or read the transcripts.

The seminar presentations are by James Dunbar, Editor of the AJRH; Prasuna Reddy, Assistant Editor; Vanessa Farrant from Blackwell Publishing Asia; and Denis Muller.

Denis Muller had a 27-year career in journalism, nearly all of it at The Sydney Morning Herald and The Age. He was Chief Sub-editor, News Editor and Assistant Editor of the Herald and Associate Editor of The Age. Hear Denis talk about simple writing - at <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/ajrh/?IntContId=170&IntCatId=20>

[Click here to be removed from the mailing list](#)