

NRHA eforum 21 September 2007

National Rural Health Alliance E-forum 21 September 2007

In this issue:

- * E-News from the Alliance: September 2007
- * NRHA Launches Election Priorities
- * Rural Summit confirms doctor crisis in the bush
- * Senate Committee Recommendations on Patient Travel
- * : "Seeing into Old Age - Glaucoma and Macular Degeneration" Rural Health Education Foundation satellite broadcast - Tuesday 25th September 2007
- * "Child Abuse and Neglect - Identifying & Assisting Children at Risk"
- * Labor to Improve Health Services for Rural and Regional Australia
- * Vaile Announces New \$200 million Growing Regions Plan
- * Building Better Health Care for Rural Australia - Launch of the AMA Rural Health Policy Paper
- * Australia's Remote Nurse Practitioners call for Remote Health Service and Health Financing Reform
- * Federal Labor Clear Dental Backlog By Establishing A Commonwealth Dental Health Program
- * Rural Health on the ABC
- * Supporting health professionals in the Northern Territory
- * What's On
- * Contribution and subscription information and disclaimer
- * Full text of "Rural Summit confirms doctor crisis in the bush"
- * Full text of "Health infrastructure, regional development, and birthing in the bush"
- * Full text of "ALP confirms it's good news on dental health"
- * Full text of "PATS report moves patient travel assistance in the right direction"

+++++

E-News from the Alliance: September 2007

Here's the latest e-news from the Alliance - and at a particularly interesting time for rural health. Please keep us informed about what's happening in your local area and remember that Marshall Wilson, our Media Adviser, would like to hear about local stories and case-studies that illustrate the policy issues we're concerned with. In particular, if there are stories in your area about the top seven issues for us in the Election (see below), please let us know.

Launch of NRHA's Key Election Priorities

This week the Alliance launched its Key Priorities and Election Charter in Parliament House. Speakers included Senator Judith Adams, Professor John Wakerman, the Hon Tony Abbott, Minister for Health and Ageing; Nicola Roxon, Shadow Minister for Health; Senator Bob Brown, Leader of the Greens; and Senator Lyn Allison, Leader of the Australian Democrats.

Full details of the launch, including documents, audio files, photographs, speeches and media releases will be available on the new 'Election Section' of the Alliance website at <http://www.ruralhealth.org.au>

New 'Election Section' on Alliance Website

The new 'Election Section' of our website includes NRHA material related to the election, plus a scorecard that will be updated as the Parties announce their health policies.

You can also download and print a copy of a 'Vote 1 Rural Health' poster to display in your workplace.

To keep up to date with Alliance media releases and other important information don't forget to regularly visit the Latest News section of our website

<http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/news/?IntCatId=8>

We want to hear your rural health story!

Do you have a particular story to tell that would be of interest to the media in the forthcoming election? If so, we'd love to receive it from you. We are after both positive and negative stories that can be used to highlight the real issues facing people in rural and remote Australia.

Please send your story to nrha@ruralhealth.org.au together with your contact details and a photograph if you have one.

Partyline No 31

The next edition of *Partyline* will be out shortly and will contain articles from the Minister for Health and Ageing and Shadow Minister for Health, as well other other material related to the election. It will also include success stories in health service delivery in rural areas, reports on the Croc Fest and Garma Festival, community health education programs and other resources and news.

Included with this edition will be a hardcopy of the Alliance's Key Priorities document.

The electronic version of *Partyline* will be available in the 'Publications' section of our website at: <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/publications/?IntContId=57&IntCatId=6>

If you would like to receive *Partyline*, send your contact details to nrha@ruralhealth.org.au and let us know if you'd prefer a hard copy in the mail or email notification of its availability on the webpage.

'Rural and Remote Health Papers 1991-2007' CD Out Now

The 'Rural and Remote Health Papers 1991-2007' CD is now available and has been sent to all 9th Conference delegates and financial members of *friends* of the Alliance. The CD contains all papers, publications and Conference proceedings produced by the Alliance since 1991, as well as some other key documents on rural and remote health.

If you would like to receive a copy you can find a *friends* membership form on our website at: <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/friends/?IntCatId=4>

Farewell to Andrew.....

Andrew Waters, the Alliance's Manager of Policy and Communications, is leaving the Alliance this week to return to Western Australia. The Alliance wishes him every success in his new position as the Director of Population Health in Port Hedland.

+++++

NRHA LAUNCHES ELECTION PRIORITIES

The Alliance has launched its Key Priorities and Election Charter in Parliament this week. These documents, together with other election related material, can be found on

the 'Election Section' of the website at
<http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/election/?IntCatId=24>. You can also download and print
your own 'Vote 1 Rural Health' Poster at
<http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/election/docs/a1voteposter.pdf>

At the launch, Federal Opposition Health spokesperson Nicola Roxon confirmed her
party's support for rural health, including indigenous and dental health. Her statement
is at <http://www.alp.org.au/media/0907/mshea211.php> and her speech is available at
<http://www.alp.org.au/media/0907/spehea200.php>

+++++

RURAL SUMMIT CONFIRMS DOCTOR CRISIS IN THE BUSH

The National Rural Health Alliance joined other key organisations at the Rural Crisis
Summit called by the AMA, which described the serious and worsening situation
facing the general practice workforce in rural communities. The full text of the
Alliance statement is at
<http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/AMA%20Rural%20Summit%2010%20September.pdf> and is reprinted below.

+++++

SENATE COMMITTEE RECOMMENDATIONS ON PATIENT TRAVEL

The Senate Community Affairs Committee has recommended national standards to
improve patient assisted travel schemes. The Committee's report is at
http://www.aph.gov.au/Senate/committee/clac_ctte/pats/report/index.htm

The NRHA has welcomed the recommendations of a Senate Committee Inquiry into
patient assisted travel schemes (PATS) released yesterday. The Committee report,
Highway to health: better access for rural, regional and remote patients, recommends
the urgent establishment of a taskforce to set national standards for the State-run
schemes. The full text of the NRHA statement is at and is reprinted below.

Chair of the AMA Rural Reference Group, Dr David Rivett, said he was pleased to
see many of the recommendations address the major issues previously raised by the
AMA. The AMA statement is at <http://www.ama.com.au/web.nsf/doc/WEEN-7789AT>

The Rural Doctors Association described the recommendations as a win for rural
patients. The RDAA statement is at
http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded_documents/RDAA%20RELEASE%2021_09_07%20PATS.pdf

+++++

From: Don Perlgut
Subject: "Seeing into Old Age - Glaucoma and Macular Degeneration" Rural Health
Education Foundation satellite broadcast - Tuesday 25th September 2007

Seeing into Old Age:

Glaucoma and Macular Degeneration

Rural Health Education Foundation

LIVE Satellite Television Broadcast

Tuesday 25th September 8pm EST (repeated Friday 28th September 12:30pm EST)

Funding provided by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing

Program Information is at <http://www.rhef.com.au/programs/713/713.html>

Satellite Site Locations <http://www.rhef.com.au/viewing/viewing.html>

RSVP to rhef@rhef.com.au?subject=RSVP%20to%20Glaucoma

Seeing into Old Age: Glaucoma and Macular Degeneration

Macular degeneration and glaucoma, respectively, sit at the top of the list of vision disorders as the leading causes of both irreversible and preventable blindness for Australians aged over 55 years.

Glaucoma affects 2.3% (109,300 people) of the Australian population aged over 55. A staggering 50% of patients with glaucoma are unaware they have it which when left undiagnosed and untreated can greatly reduce quality of life for those affected. Non-diagnosis is common because the peripheral vision is affected, often at a slow and subtle rate.

Macular degeneration affects a greater number of Australians, with 3.1% or 147,000 of people aged over 55 having the disease. The effects of macular degeneration are more debilitating than glaucoma because it affects the central vision and onset can occur rapidly and with little warning.

This program focuses on glaucoma and macular degeneration. For each, the program will discuss traditional and emerging diagnosis and treatments plus promising areas of future research into prevention and reversal of glaucoma and macular degeneration. Key information is also discussed about prevention, clinical detection and ongoing management. Case studies are also included.

After watching this program, participants will be able to:

- * Describe the risk factors for both glaucoma and age-related macular degeneration (AMD)
- * Identify the clinical degenerative features of Glaucoma and AMD
- * Outline the established and emerging treatments available for Glaucoma and AMD
- * Describe the effects of reduced or total loss of vision for older Australians.

Panellists include:

Chair: Dr Norman Swan, Presenter of the Health Report on ABC Radio National.

Professor Hugh Ringland Taylor, Managing Director, Centre for Eye Research Australia (CERA), and Director, WHO Collaborating Centre for the Prevention of Blindness.

Dr Mark Gorbатов, Ophthalmologist, Sydney Eye Hospital & Orange Eye Centre

NSW.

Dr Geraldine Moses, Pharmacist, Mater Health Services, Brisbane QLD, and
Pharmaceutical Society of Australia spokesperson.

Dr Christopher Hopwood, Rural General Practitioner, Dunedoo NSW.

Mr Nicholas Hansen, Rural Optometrist, Orange NSW.

This program will be broadcast LIVE on Tuesday 25th September on Channel 4 at:

- 8.00pm in ACT, NSW, TAS, VIC & QLD
- 7.30pm in SA & NT
- 6.00pm in WA (and repeated in WA on Channel 23 at 8.00pm)

Repeated on Friday 28th September on Channel 23 at:

- 12.30pm in ACT, NSW, VIC, TAS & QLD
- 12 noon in SA & NT
- 10.30am in WA

This program will be web streamed after the live broadcast and will also be available
as a downloadable audio MP3 file. For more details visit the
<http://www.rhef.com.au/programs/713/713.html> program page.

+++++

CHILD ABUSE AND NEGLECT - IDENTIFYING AND ASSISTING CHILDREN AT RISK

National satellite television broadcast Presented by the Rural Health Education
Foundation Tuesday 9th October 2007 8:00pm EST (repeated Friday 12th October
12:30pm EST)

Funded by the Australian Government Department of Health and Ageing

This program alerts health practitioners to the high prevalence of abuse and neglect
among children who may be coming for other healthcare treatments. The program
aims to facilitate health professionals in identifying children at risk for abuse and
neglect and discusses issues on how to handle concerns and issues around
notification, particularly in the rural setting.

Further details about the program visit

<http://www.rhef.com.au/programs/615/615.html>

+++++

9th NATIONAL RURAL HEALTH CONFERENCE - PROCEEDINGS OUT NOW!

7 - 10 March 2007, Albury, New South Wales

Those unable to attend the 9th National Rural Health Conference in Albury (7-10
March 2007) should take heart. The National Rural Health Alliance (NRHA) has
comprehensively updated its website by adding post-Conference information to keep
you informed about the state of health in Australia's rural and remote areas.

For instance a Conference Communique highlights the two burning issues that remain
even after 17 years of fruitful discussion - the lower rate of Indigenous life expectancy
and the insufficient focus within national research programs on rural and remote

health and wellbeing.

The NRHA invites you to download the Communique at a keystroke by visiting <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/conferences/?IntCatId=9> and clicking on the Visit the Conference hotlink.

The revised website also contains a downloadable copy of the 18 priority recommendations covering matters such as Indigenous health, arts-in-health, the health workforce and research to help rural communities cope with the health and social effects of the drought.

A full set of 250 Conference recommendations is also available. They provide a snapshot of current thinking on rural and remote health issues identified by delegates in March 2007 under the theme Standing up for Rural Health: Learning from the past - Action for the future.

But wait there's more...

The new-look site includes colour headshots of each of the 20 keynote speakers, including transcripts of what they said and audio accounts that allow you to better gauge how each one was delivered.

The quality lineup includes the keynote address of Federal Health Minister, Tony Abbott, as well as Senator Kate Lundy, the Shadow Minister for Health Promotion. Other guest speakers included Rhonda Galbally, Steve Clark, Philip Davies and John Menadue, among others.

+++++

LABOR TO IMPROVE HEALTH SERVICES FOR RURAL AND REGIONAL AUSTRALIA

Federal Labor will reform the Rural Medical Infrastructure Fund (RMIF) to improve health infrastructure in rural communities, Shadow Minister for Regional Services Simon Crean and Shadow Minister for Health Nicola Roxon have announced.

A Rudd Labor Government will:

- * broaden eligibility for funding to towns with populations of up to 20,000
- * allow Divisions of General Practice and local government organisations to apply for program funding for facilities which are located on hospital or health campus grounds
- * allow private practices to apply for funding where it will be used for training facilities for medical students
- * increase the cap on grants to \$500,000 per application, and relax the requirements for matching funding to recognise that many communities - particularly in drought affected areas - have difficulty raising the matching funds
- * ensure that Labor's regional development network, Regional Development Australia, promotes the program and provides ongoing assistance to those groups applying for funding.

The full text of the statement is at <http://www.alp.org.au/media/0907/msheard120.php>

The National Rural Health Alliance welcomed the Labor Party announcement that, if elected to government, it would reform the Rural Medical Infrastructure Fund (RMIF) to enable more country communities to benefit from its assistance. The RMIF makes funding available to help rural communities provide and improve infrastructure for medical services, including for the building of new medical facilities. The NRHA advocates development of multidisciplinary health services and the infrastructure to support them, including in smaller country towns. This infrastructure support should be available through a variety of local agencies. The full text of the NRHA statement is at

<http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/rmif%20and%20birthing%20in%20the%20bush%2013%20september.pdf> and is reprinted below.

The announcement was also welcomed by the AMA - see <http://www.ama.com.au/web.nsf/doc/WEEN-76YAGM> for details.

+++++

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 October 2007 issue of the journal is available online now at <http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/links/toc/ajr>. Articles include:

- * The Northern Territory can provide hope for the future
- * Where is the evidence that rural exposure increases uptake of rural medical practice?
- * Informing rural and remote students about careers in health: Factors influencing career decisions
- * Diabetes risk factors, diabetes and diabetes care in a rural Australian community
- * Improving access to and outcomes from mental health care in rural Australia
- * Where do I go from here: We've got enough seniors?
- * Self-reported confidence and skills of general practitioners in management of mental health disorders
- * Cardiovascular risk levels in general practice patients with type 2 diabetes in rural and urban areas
- * Supporting an emerging workforce: Characteristics of rural and remote therapy assistants in Western Australia
- * Grazings
- * From the Journal Associates

+++++

VAILE ANNOUNCES NEW \$200 MILLION GROWING REGIONS PLAN

The Government announced it will establish a new \$200 million program to help working families in regional Australia cope with the impacts of rapid growth. The Deputy Prime Minister, Minister for Transport and Regional Services and Leader of

The Nationals, Mark Vaile, announced the new Growing Regions plan. His statement is at http://www.ministers.dotars.gov.au/mv/releases/2007/September/145MV_2007.htm

+++++

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, and regular issues of PARTYline newsletter. 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.

+++++

BUILDING BETTER HEALTH CARE FOR RURAL AUSTRALIA - LAUNCH OF THE AMA RURAL HEALTH POLICY PAPER

Significant and urgent funding is needed to address the health care crisis in country Australia, and all political parties should use the upcoming federal election to put forward solutions to bridge the gap between country and city health care, according to the AMA.

At the AMA launch of *Bridging the Gap - better health care in regional, rural, and remote Australia*, AMA Federal President, Dr Rosanna Capolingua, said the major parties must focus on policies that will make a long-term difference, not just temporary measures.

The AMA statement is at <http://www.ama.com.au/web.nsf/doc/WEEN-76VVTX> and the AMA paper is at <http://www.ama.com.au/web.nsf/doc/WEEN-76V7MC>

+++++

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

Partyline Edition 30 includes:

- * highlights from the 9th National Rural Health Conference, including reviews of keynote addresses, in-depth discussion of health reform, the role of the arts in achieving good health, impressions from delegates, student voices, policy impact of

- recommendations, rural health winners, and pictorial highlights
- * equal health within a generation for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples
- * responses to Budget 2007-08
- * writing for publication
- * telling your rural health story
- * rural health news
- * resources
- * dates for your calendar.

+++++

LIFELINE INFORMATION SERVICE - 1300 13 11 14

Your Rural Mental Health Information Service

Lifeline's Information Service 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.lifeline.org.au/infoservice> and further information is available at infoservice@lifeline.org.au and <http://www.lifeline.org.au>

+++++

From: Sabina Knight

Subject: Australia's Remote Nurse Practitioners call for Remote Health Service and Health Financing Reform

Remote Nurse Practitioners, leading Remote Practice and Nurse Practitioner academics and Nurse Practitioner candidates met in Broken Hill this week to discuss strategies to improve health outcomes in remote and isolated Australia. A focus of the discussion was the national realisation that health need was clearly outstripping the capacity of the services. Not all solutions lie with health services, but for those that do, it is not currently coping.

It was agreed at the forum that the Australian health care system had failed to deliver consistent quality health care to people who most need it and was unlikely to have the capacity to meet these needs in the immediate future. Remote Australia relies on a unique model of health care of remote area nurses (RANs) and Aboriginal health Workers providing the day to day health care with fly in and distance support from GPs, specialists and allied health professionals and the Royal Flying Doctor Service.

There is an acute shortage of qualified remote area nurses, midwives and remote nurse practitioners and those who are qualified, are not supported or provided access to key schemes to work effectively. This is a situation that cannot continue. It is critical that we respond to this not only quickly but effectively in building an effective and capable workforce.

It is clear that the health financing arrangement in relation to services provided by remote nurse practitioners and remote area nurses needs urgent reform. Withholding critical aspects of clinical care potentially puts patients and practitioners in a clinically dangerous position having to treat blind when they are unable to order appropriate or

timely pathology or have drug therapy commence or adjusted.

Sabina Knight
Senior Lecturer Remote Health Practice & CRANA Research Fellow Centre
for Remote Health PO Box 4066 Alice Springs NT 0871 Ph 61 8 89514709 Mob
0417823933

+++++

FEDERAL LABOR CLEAR DENTAL BACKLOG BY ESTABLISHING A COMMONWEALTH DENTAL HEALTH PROGRAM

A Rudd Labor Government will fund up to one million additional dental consultations for Australians needing dental treatment by establishing a Commonwealth Dental Health Program. Federal Labor Leader Kevin Rudd pledged to invest up to \$290 million to a Commonwealth Dental Health Program - one of the first programs scrapped by the Howard Government in 1996. This is the first instalment of Labor's Commonwealth Dental Health Program. The full text of the ALP statement is at <http://www.alp.org.au/media/0907/mshea180.php>

The NRHA said that the confirmation from the ALP of its plans to make funding available through the states and territories for dental consultations is very good news for people in rural and remote areas. They are among the groups most adversely affected by the poor state of oral and dental health in Australia. The full text of the NRHA statement is at <http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/cms/uploads/media/alp%20re%20dental%20health%2018%20september.pdf> and is reprinted below.

+++++

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 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>)

DOCTORS LOBBY FOR HUGE FUNDING BOOST

The Australian Medical Association says both the Federal Government and Opposition need to boost spending to turn around the rural health crisis. The government has hinted it will increase incentive payments for doctors to go to country areas. But AMA Rural chairman, David Rivett, says both sides of politics are only

promising a fraction of what's needed to attract doctors, and upgrade infrastructure. "The Coalition seems to think the problem's solved, which today has demonstrated is quite wrong, it's an enormous problem and growing at a very rapid pace. The Labor Party seems very worried about committing to any spending initiatives, because they want to be seen as strict fiscal managers in the lead up to the election. So that's where we're at, between a rock and a hard place."

And Labor says it would make it easier for rural communities to access the Rural Medical Infrastructure Fund.

The Federal Opposition says only \$3 million has been allocated to help communities upgrade their medical facilities, out of the Government's \$15 million dollar fund. Regional Development spokesman Simon Crean says the criteria would be broadened, so bigger towns could apply for help.

"They can accommodate populations up to 20,000. We're saying that in a number of regions, particularly those affected by drought, they've been having difficulty attracting the matching funds which are also a requirement, we would relax that. And importantly, we are going to involve the professions, not just the pork-barrel mentality, as to where these go."

RURAL DOCTORS DEMAND MORE FUNDING

Jane Bardon (national rural reporter)

Rural health groups are heavily lobbying both the Federal Government and Opposition for funding, as the election approaches. They held a crisis summit in Canberra this week, where the Deputy Prime Minister, Mark Vaile, hinted the government could increase its incentive payments for doctors to go to regional areas. But the Rural Doctors Association, the Rural Health Alliance, and the Australian Medical Association all say that won't work. The AMA's rural chairman, Dr David Rivett, says both sides of politics are just tinkering at the edges of a system which needed a huge cash injection.

Action urged on Indigenous cataract treatment

A study has suggested that better support services and greater flexibility are needed in remote Indigenous communities to encourage more people to seek treatment for cataracts.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2007/09/16/2034071.htm>

Researcher 'gobsmacked' by Indigenous dementia levels

A new study has found Indigenous Australians are 26 times more likely to develop dementia than the rest of the Australian population, and some sufferers are as young as 45 years old.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2007/09/18/2036122.htm>

HOWARD PROMISES \$100M MORE IN NT INTERVENTION (AM: 18/09/2007)

<http://www.abc.net.au/am/content/2007/s2036017.htm>

<http://www.abc.net.au/worldtoday/content/2007/s2034775.htm>

<http://www.abc.net.au/am/content/2007/s2032722.htm>

Many Aboriginal people 'confused' by intervention

The head of the Commonwealth's emergency task force in the Northern Territory says explaining the intervention to community members remains the biggest challenge.

<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2007/09/20/2039127.htm>

National standard needed for patient travel costs: inquiry
A Senate inquiry has found there is an urgent need for a set of national standards to coordinate the support schemes for patients who have to travel for medical treatment.
<http://www.abc.net.au/news/stories/2007/09/21/2040252.htm>

+++++

CURRENT ISSUE OF eMJA
(Available at <http://www.mja.com.au/>)

Rapid online publication, 20 July 2007
HIV diagnoses in Australia: diverging epidemics within a low prevalence country

Current issue: 17 September 2007
From the Editor's Desk: Expunging eponyms
Polycystic ovary syndrome and abnormal glucose tolerance
Simplifying the diagnosis of pulmonary embolism
Glucose tolerance abnormalities in Australian women with polycystic ovary syndrome
A prospective reassessment of the utility of the Wells score in identifying pulmonary embolism
Acupuncture for persistent allergic rhinitis: a randomised, sham-controlled trial
Directions for clinical practice improvement in *HFE* gene mutation testing
Public Health
Vibrio cholerae O1 El Tor cluster in Sydney linked to imported whitebait
NHMRC grant applications: a comparison of "track record" scores allocated by grant assessors with bibliometric analysis of publications
Remote Indigenous Australians with cataracts: they are blind and still can't see
Tako-tsubo cardiomyopathy: how stress can mimic acute coronary occlusion
Serotonin toxicity: a practical approach to diagnosis and treatment
Paralysis caused by "nagging"
Apical lung hernia

+++++

SUPPORTING HEALTH PROFESSIONALS IN THE NORTHERN TERRITORY

The Minister for Health and Ageing, Tony Abbott, said the Commonwealth Government has committed a further \$100 million for more doctors, nurses, allied health professionals and specialist services as part of the Northern Territory Emergency Response. A new Remote Area Health Corps will be established to attract and support the increased numbers of urban-based health professionals needed to provide more health care in remote communities. The full text of Mr Abbott's statement is at <http://www.health.gov.au/internet/ministers/publishing.nsf/Content/mr-yr07-ta-abb116.htm>

The announcement was welcomed by the Rural Doctors Association - see RDAAs statement is at http://www.rdaa.com.au/uploaded_documents/ACF163.pdf

+++++

THE LIME CONNECTION II "CULTURES ACROSS THE INDIGENOUS HEALTH SPECTRUM: ACHIEVING BETTER OUTCOMES"

The Medical Deans of Australia and New Zealand (Medical Deans) and the Australian Indigenous Doctors Association (AIDA) announce The LIME Connection II conference, held in Sydney from Sunday 23rd to Tuesday 25th September, 2007.

Leaders in the field of Indigenous medical education and practice will present their experiences and share innovative approaches through a mix of keynote addresses, oral and poster presentations, group discussions and a public lecture. Topics will include:

- * reviewing medical schools' progress towards implementing the curriculum framework and Indigenous student initiatives
- * learning and sharing with other health science disciplines, postgraduate medical education bodies, medical colleges and divisions
- * defining cultural safety in Australian health and medical education
- * looking toward the future to examine what's possible and where we go from here

For further information, please visit the LIME Connection II web site at <http://www.limenetwork.net.au/conference/welcome>

+++++

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

+++++

ANTI-POVERTY WEEK

Help fight poverty and hardship in Australia and overseas. Organise an activity during the Week - 14-20 October 2007 - big or small, local or national. FOR INFO & IDEAS, see <http://www.antipovertyweek.org.au> OR CONTACT US AT 1300 797 290; or apw@antipovertyweek.org.au

+++++

Climate Change and Human Health Conference
Tuesday 16 and Wednesday 17 October 2007
Park Hyatt Hotel, Melbourne, Australia
<http://www.healthclimate2007.com>

+++++

From: Scott Wagner
Subject: NSW Rural Allied Health Conference 2007, Dubbo, October 18-19
Details are at <http://www.nswrahc.com>.

+++++

ACRRM AGM and Conference - Friday 26 October to Sunday 28 October

ACRRM will hold its AGM in NSW on the weekend of 26-28 October 2007. A program of educational activities will also be held for practitioners, registrars and students. Information at <http://www.acrrm.org.au/>

+++++

UNIVERSITY OF MELBOURNE, SCHOOL OF RURAL HEALTH, 2007 RESEARCH CONFERENCE

The University of Melbourne, School of Rural Health, invites you to participate in the 3rd Annual Shepparton Research Conference on Tuesday 27th November 2007 from 9am to 5pm.

The research conference, entitled: "Moving Forward: Rural Research & Knowledge Transfer" is intended for individuals and organisations with an interest in rural health, including general practice, primary health care, integrated care and population health, research and evaluation. Register online by accessing the School of Rural health website <http://www.ruralhealth.unimelb.edu.au> and clicking on the conference link after that date. A hardcopy of the registration pack can be obtained by emailing the Conference Secretariat.

Pauline Venn Conference Secretariat pvenn@unimelb.edu.au Ph: 03 5823 4532

+++++

From: Jane Howorth - ECC Information Desk
Subject: NSW Rural Mental Health Conference

This year's NSW Rural Mental Health Conference is taking place in Batemans Bay, 3 - 5 December 2007, hosted by the Greater Southern Area Health Service. Further information on the conference website:

<http://www.rmhconference.com> or by contacting info@eastcoastconferences.com.au, tel 02 6650 9800.

+++++

"DISADVANTAGE AND DIVERSITY" - AUSTRALIA'S WELFARE 2007 CONFERENCE

Thursday 6 December, The Marque Hotel, 102 Northbourne Avenue, Canberra

"Disadvantage and Diversity", a one-day conference to be held in the nation's capital, will provide a forum for debate and discussion on some of the issues facing Australia's Welfare. Topics covered will include ageing and aged care, children, youth and families, welfare service resources, and the dynamics of homelessness. if you would like to register your interest to receive further information please contact the conference coordinator by telephone or email - Alison Diamond, Tel (02) 6244 1287, Fax (02) 6244 1299, Email conference2007@aihw.gov.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.

+++++

DIVERSITY IN HEALTH CONFERENCE

The Diversity in Health 2008: Strengths and Sustainable Solutions Conference (DIH 2008) will be the major event in diversity health in Australia for 2008.

The international conference will be held at the premier conference site at the Sydney Convention and Exhibition Centre, from 10-12 March 2008. DIH 2008 will bring national and international leaders in the health industry together to showcase new and innovative approaches to providing quality health care for Australia's diverse communities. The conference will consider, review and develop strengths and sustainable solutions in the overall approach to health and well-being of culturally and linguistically diverse communities.

To register or to find out more about this momentous event, please go to: <http://www.dhi.gov.au/conference>. Brochures can be downloaded off the website or you can contact the Conference Secretariat on Tel: +61 2 9840 3800 Fax: +61 2 9840 3319, or email: dhi@swahs.health.nsw.gov.au

+++++

From: Emma Grayson
Subject: 10th International Paediatric and Child Health Nursing Conference

The 10th International Paediatric and Child Health Nursing Conference is to be held at the Holiday Inn Esplanade and Darwin Entertainment Centre, Northern Territory, from Wednesday, 30 April to Friday, 2 May 2008. The conference is being hosted by the Australian Confederation of Paediatric and Child Health Nurses. The conference is expected to attract between 200 and 400 delegates from across Australia and abroad.

Through the implementation of the theme "Crossing barriers", this conference aims to illustrate that barriers can and must be crossed to improve health outcomes for

children and young people. The conference aims are: to advance paediatric and child health nursing's contribution to health care and facilitate the dissemination of evidence highlighting effective nursing interventions to arise the profile of the benefits of interdisciplinary collaboration to identify future directions for paediatric and child health nursing to provide a forum that stimulates debate and collegiality.

For more information, to register your expression of interest or to download the call for abstracts, please visit the conference website at <http://www.ipchnconference.com.au> or by contacting the conference secretariat via email at info@ipchnconference.com.au or by telephone +61 7 3858 5503.

+++++

POPULATION HEALTH CONGRESS 2008
A Global World - Practical action for health and Well-being

Come to Brisbane and join in Australia's population health event of the decade. Four organisations are working together to provide a line-up of international and national speakers that promises to be excellent.

The Population health Congress 2008 will be held on July 7-9 in the Brisbane Convention and exhibition Centre. Regular updates on Congress 2008 will be available at <http://www.populationhealthcongress.org.au> - log on to register your interest.

Enquiries:
Conference Coordinators
PO Box 139
Calwe ll ACt 2905
Ph (02) 6292 9000
congress2008@confco.com.au

+++++

10th National Rural Health Conference
The 10th National Rural Health Conference will be held in Cairns in May 2009. Keep an eye on our website for up-to-date information about the Conference. The first announcement will be the Call for Abstracts in early 2008.

+++++

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

10 September 2007

Rural Summit confirms doctor crisis in the bush

The National Rural Health Alliance joined other key organisations today at the Rural Crisis Summit called by the AMA, which described the serious and worsening situation facing the general practice workforce in rural communities.

A series of speakers confirmed the current situation of reducing numbers of doctors and services, with little likelihood of significant improvement for at least a decade.

The percentage of medical graduates choosing general practice rather than specialist or other practice has fallen from around 45% a few years ago, to 25% at the present time. The number of GP trainees is well below replacement requirements.

Considerable doubt was expressed about the prospect of sufficient of the growing number of medical students choosing rural practice in the future. "We need more nurses and allied health professionals too, for interdisciplinary teams," Professor Wakerman said. "But without doctors we aren't even at first base."

The number of Australian-trained GPs choosing rural practice has plummeted. Rural Australia is now almost totally dependent on Overseas Trained Doctors (OTDs) for recruitment to the medical workforce and for replacement of the large percentage of older Australian GPs as they retire. Even with the OTDs, rural vacancies are increasing.

Speakers emphasised the need for much better support, assistance and training for OTDs entering the rural medical workforce, and the importance of having adequate numbers of locally-trained doctors to support and mentor individual OTDs.

There was a range of recommendations for improving training, rural subsidies and the general attractiveness of the key aspects of rural practice, including infrastructure and rural-based training - two key Alliance proposals. A number of speakers also referred to the importance of adequate Medicare rebates for rural doctors.

The Alliance calls on all political parties to tackle this key issue for the 7 million Australians living in rural and remote areas.

+++++

Media Release

13 September 2007

Health infrastructure, regional development, and birthing in the bush

The NRHA has welcomed the Labor Party announcement that, if elected to government, it would reform the Rural Medical Infrastructure Fund (RMIF) to enable more country communities to benefit from its assistance.

The RMIF makes funding available to help rural communities provide and improve infrastructure for medical services, including for the building of new medical facilities. The NRHA advocates development of multidisciplinary health services and the infrastructure to support them, including in smaller country towns. This infrastructure support should be available through a variety of local agencies.

NRHA Chairperson John Wakerman also welcomed the additional investment in growing regions announced this week by Deputy Prime Minister Mark Vaile.

The *Australian Government's Growing Regions Programme* will provide \$200 million over four years 'to address the effects of rapid growth, structural change, population migration and population ageing'. Businesses, local governments, institutions and communities will be able to apply for funding of \$1-3 million per project, with a requirement for matching funds from the State/Territory government and the project proponent.

"Given the relationship between regional development and health, this new focus on regions experiencing growth makes good sense," Professor Wakerman said today from Alice Springs. "However, in contrast, many other towns and regions are experiencing the impact of long-term drought and loss of economic and service activity.

"We need a national plan for rural, regional and remote areas to accommodate the full range of economic and social change being experienced by non-metropolitan communities."

He referred to a recent University of Ballarat study which reports that health professionals have been advising women with diabetes not to have children because of 'insufficient medical services in regional and rural towns to deal with the complications caused by diabetes during pregnancy'.

"When family planning decisions in a country as affluent as Australia are determined by location, it shows that our national health system is in need of urgent attention," he said.

"When families in country areas are facing such stark choices, it illustrates the extent of the need to build the physical infrastructure and provide an appropriately skilled health workforce in rural and remote areas," Professor Wakerman said.

+++++

ALP confirms it's good news on dental health

Today's confirmation from the ALP of its plans to make funding available through the states and territories for dental consultations is very good news for people in rural and

remote areas. They are among the groups most adversely affected by the poor state of oral and dental health in Australia.

The Alliance has been calling on political parties to commit to significant national investment in oral and dental health.

Professor John Wakerman, Chairperson, confirmed that the NRHA has been a strong supporter of the national plan produced by ACOSS and the Australian Dental Association.

"Making the funding for dental consultations is an essential first step. However, there is a very serious shortage of dentists in rural and remote areas in both the public and private sectors," Professor Wakerman said.

"We hope the ALP will therefore also consider specific rural initiatives to improve the supply of dentists and oral hygienists."

The Alliance is launching its election charter in Parliament house this Thursday. It includes a bid for this specific action - additional dental and oral places in tertiary education, undergraduate scholarships for people from rural areas to study dentistry and oral hygiene, and a dentists' relocation incentive program.

+++++

PATS report moves patient travel assistance in the right direction

The NRHA has welcomed the recommendations of a Senate Committee Inquiry into patient assisted travel schemes (PATS) released yesterday. The Committee report, *Highway to health: better access for rural, regional and remote patients*, recommends the urgent establishment of a taskforce to set national standards for the State-run schemes.

Implementation of the recommendations will improve the design, administration and cross-border aspects of the schemes. Western Australian Senator, Judith Adams, a strong campaigner for the Inquiry and a member of the Committee, said the taskforce would be a key to inter-government work on an improved system.

"I have been campaigning for improved patient assistance since 1990 and I am very pleased with the recommendations of this Report," Senator Adams said.

The taskforce, to be established by the Australian Health Ministers' Advisory Council, will comprise representatives from State and Commonwealth Governments, consumers and practitioners. New national standards are expected to be in place by this time next year.

The taskforce will have responsibility for simplifying the application process, considering an on-line option, and investigating the possibility of a pre-payment system. It will also determine transport and accommodation subsidy rates that more truly reflect actual travel costs and that keep pace with changes in living costs.

NRHA chair, Professor John Wakerman, said it was pleasing to see this national step towards improving the operation and effectiveness of patient assisted travel schemes.

"It will always be the case that much diagnostic testing, complex treatment and follow-up care are only available at tertiary hospitals, so schemes to subsidise patients for travel are part of the core services for health in more remote areas. National standards of support for travel and accommodation will contribute to equity of services for people living in rural and remote areas," Professor Wakerman said.

The Committee also outlined a role for the next Australian Health Care Agreements in defining and improving services, clearly allocating funds and monitoring outcomes. New hospitals and health centres are encouraged to incorporate accommodation facilities into their planning and design. Indigenous representatives will be consulted to ensure better access to services for Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander patients.

"This is good progress - and the Alliance will continue to work with governments towards improved systems and outcomes," Professor Wakerman said.

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