



NORTHERN RIVERS

University Department of Rural Health

Associate Professors



Dr Deborah Schofield



and
Dr Jeffrey Fuller
join NRUDRH
profiles page 2

PHC RED funds
Research Support
Officers and Clinicians
appointments
Page 2

Writing for Publication



Workshop

See page 2 for details

Highlights from 2004

2004 has seen the NRUDRH continue to thrive. Despite being the newest, and least funded, of the ten UDRHs, we support well over the average number of student placements and have higher than average levels of student satisfaction. Of course none of these placements would be possible without the commitment and support of the many local clinicians involved in supervision.

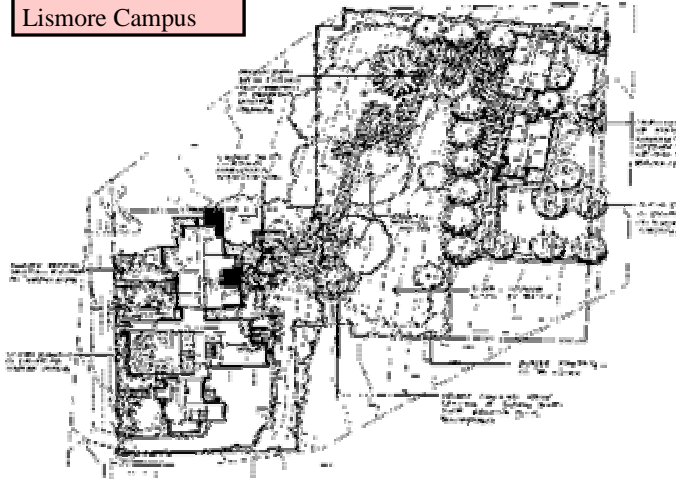
Our state of the art videoconferencing facilities have provided students with access to lectures from Royal North Shore and Westmead Hospitals, and allows staff and clinicians to access a range of seminars and presentations from University of Sydney campuses. This facility also helps reduce the isolation of our other campuses at Grafton and Murwillumbah, and fosters collaboration with our partners in the Broken Hill UDRH and the Australian Centre for Agricultural Health and Safety at Moree.

One of the biggest barriers to student placements is suitable accommodation. The UDRH has been successful in winning funding to refurbish two houses on our Lismore campus to provide eight bedrooms of student accommodation and further funding to refurbish and air-condition 10 rooms at Grafton Base Hospital. Both of these

now received Development Consent and we hope the buildings will be completed by August.

Even with this investment, office accommodation will be pushed to meet our growing staff needs. Associate Professor Jeffrey Fuller was recently appointed to replace Dr Kim Webber, who has moved to work with Beyond Blue in Melbourne. External research funding has also allowed us to appoint a number of other staff including Associate Professor Deborah Schofield who will lead the research program of the Australian Rural Health Research Collaboration, Paul Houlder who has been appointed as GIS Specialist/Data Manager, Lisa Barnett, Deborah Donoghue and Libby Holden who have been appointed as Research Support Officers to help build research capacity among local clinicians, Nola Tomaska who is working on a clinical evaluation, and Kerry Northcott who has been appointed as the Department's Information Management and Technology Officer. You will find profiles of these staff members in this newsletter and future editions.

Lismore Campus



Perhaps the UDRH's most notable recent success reflects our rapidly growing capacity for quality research. The newly created NSW Department of Science and Medical Research recently released a discussion paper on medical research, proposing that NSW should focus medical research within 5 urban research hubs. We argued strongly that this disadvantaged rural communities and made it even

redevelopments will be finished by June 2005.

Educational facilities and office accommodation have also received a boost, with the Australian Department of Health and Ageing recently agreeing to provide a further \$400,000 toward redevelopment of the Lismore campus. Along with funds already committed by the Department, the University of Sydney, Southern Cross University and the North Coast Area Health Service, this will allow us to build a 60 seat tiered lecture theatre, purpose designed video-conferencing and problem based learning rooms, and further office accommodation. This will be built between the two existing buildings at the campus, which have now also been refurbished. While progress has been slow, the proposal has

harder to overcome existing disparities. In their response the Department has recently announced the creation of three new hubs, including a rural research network based with our research team in Lismore. We have already had further discussions with the Department about ensuring rural needs are addressed in their capital works plan, and hope this will position rural NSW to feature more strongly in the development of future medical research capacity in NSW.



Dr Jeffrey Fuller— joins Education Team

It's great to be back in the thick of rural health and there is hardly a better environment in Australia for this than the Northern Rivers. My first sojourn in rural health was as the Director of Public Health in Spencer Gulf for approximately five years until 2003. I led the research team in rural mental health, injury, nutrition and Indigenous health that attracted around \$1.7 million in project funds.

My practice background is in mental health nursing and also community health practice and management. Before moving into a university post I was the manager of a community health team in the outer northern suburbs of Adelaide. For quite a while I worked on the development of culturally responsive models of health care, first for immigrant communities in the northern Adelaide suburbs. I completed a Masters thesis on the role of ethnic health workers in primary health care and then a PhD on the implementation of cross cultural practice in health care. At the Spencer Gulf Rural Health School I was part of the team that reviewed the status, support arrangements and

training needs of Aboriginal health workers in South Australia and led evaluation of the Indigenous Resource Unit for Mental Health Education and Research at the University of Melbourne.

It was at the Spencer Gulf Rural Health School that I commenced a research program to examine the provision of mental health services in rural and remote locations. We worked with the Northern and Far Western Regional Health Service to develop a regional mental health plan that is now in operation. I am currently research examining an Integrated Aboriginal Mental Health Service (funded by the Australian Primary Health Care Institute through the NRUDRH) and a national survey of rural financial counsellors as a first support for psychological and stress related issues. Our rural mental health work has been published in Australian and international journals and in two recent Australian texts.

On the teaching front for five years I developed curricular and taught community health and research methods to nurses using a range of media, including computer aided instruction. In

my most recent past post I was the Coordinator of Postgraduate Programs in the Department of Public Health at the University of Adelaide where I also developed the Rural Public Health Course. This background has provided a useful basis for my new position here at NRUDRH where my main focus will be on strategic development of rural curricular.

Leonie, my wife, is a teacher and librarian and ran the Whyalla Library (SA) Children and Youth Program. She is a keen artist and can see the potential to link in with art activities in the region.

Leonie and I have been searching high and low over the region for somewhere to live on a permanent basis. A few acres with a view of the mountains would be good. In the meantime I might be seen out on the road bike with those other crazy mid-lifers (blokes mainly) in their tight lycra colours riding in packs on Saturday mornings. Alternatively, I might be in a boat out on the river trying to catch that elusive fish.

Writing for Publication Workshop

Workshop 1

When: April 29, 2005

Where: Invercauld House, Lismore

Workshop 2

When: April 30, 2005

Where: Byron Bay

Guest Speaker:

Professor Deborah C Saltman AM

For more details or to enrol contact:

Research Support Officers

NRUDRH

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Dr Deborah Schofield— provides research expertise

Deborah was welcomed to the team in early November as Associate Professor, School of Public Health, University of Sydney and Research Leader, Australian Rural Health Research Collaboration.

She brings a wealth of experience having held senior positions within the Commonwealth Government and academia, and has a national and international reputation for her work in economic modelling of the health system. She was a founding member of the National Centre for Social and Economic Modelling where she established NATSEM's health research and modelling program and made a major contribution to the development of the centre's ground breaking micro simulation model of social security payment and income taxation (STINMOD). Dr Schofield's research has been extensively used within the Commonwealth Government (eg Treasury's Intergenerational Report) where she has also held senior

policy roles including the management of \$42 billion in funding for the current Australian Health Care Agreements which fund public hospitals. Her current research includes analysis and modelling of demographic change and the health workforce, a cohort study of rural health clinicians, and the use of micro simulation techniques to explain the determinants of rural health inequalities and health services evaluation.

Deborah's husband, Richard Percival, was the Deputy Director of the National Centre for Social & Economic Modelling (NATSEM) at the University of Canberra. He is continuing his work for NATSEM from the Northern Rivers. Deborah and Richard have a four-year-old son Adam, who is enrolled in the pre-kindergarten class at Emmanuel Anglican College in Ballina.

Deborah's expertise will supplement and support our existing research activities at the NRUDRH.

Support for Primary Health Care Research

The UDRH receives funding from the Australian Government to support the development of a research culture in primary health. The Department has commenced a number of initiatives under this program. One of the most important is the creation of three Research Support Officer positions to help local clinicians develop their research skills.

Lisa Barnett, Libby Holden and Deborah Donoghue (pictured right with Hudson Birden, the program coordinator), were appointed in late 2004, and between them bring a full range of skills in quantitative and qualitative research, as well as data management. Any primary care clinician planning to undertake research or evaluation should feel free to contact them for advice or assistance. We are also hoping to appoint an academic in Indigenous health under this program, and they will be available to help clinicians on projects of relevance to the local Aboriginal community.

Another component is the Researcher Development Program (RDP). This allows us to appoint local clinicians for one to two days a week to work on a topic of their interest demonstrating the high level of local interest in building research and evaluation skills. This overwhelming response stimulated North Coast GP Training to support an additional position, and we were ultimately able to offer positions to four clinicians who all commenced work on their research projects in early 2005.

The successful candidates and the areas of their research are: **Molly Galea:** determinants of successful recovery from mental illness; **Louise Sands:** Prevalence and significance of extension posturing in neonates; **Carol Stevenson:** Prevalence of Chlamydia trachomatis infection and **Pamela Walmsley:** Prevention of medication errors on hospital discharge.



From far and wide — Student report

Alex Tzivanakis and myself, recently completed five week at Lismore Base Hospital, as part of our medical elective. We both are final year medical students, currently reading Medicine at Imperial College, London. The primary aim of the elective was to experience the practice of medicine in a different environment from the one that we had become accustomed to. During the period Alex, was placed into a surgical team, whilst I was placed into the medical team. In the days we attended ward rounds, clinics, theatre sessions, RMO teaching sessions, spent time in ER and attended Grand Rounds. We both had a very enjoyable time during our stay and are very grateful to those who made time to teach us. In comparison to English hospitals, the atmosphere here at Lismore is much more relaxed, less stressful and the higher ranked staff remain far more approachable. This type of organisational structure suited our learning needs and gave us ample opportunity to ask questions to further our knowledge.

The second objective of the trip was to discover the area of Lismore and beyond, taking in the culture and wildlife. We made several trips to Brisbane, Byron Bay and Ballina. We also travelled further afield, making a journey into the outback to visit Ularu, and the Olgas. After leaving Lismore we moved onto visit Melbourne and Sydney, before making tracks back to London. Australia will always hold a special place in our hearts and we are itching to re-visit to explore Australia further. A special note of thanks should be made to Colleen Robinson, who gave us extended support throughout our visit.

- Charles Drury—Final year medical student Imperial College London.

NRUDRH — Grafton Campus — Coordinators report



TECHNICAL UPGRADE -

The installation of the new videoconferencing equipment in Grafton has been completed and will be available for meetings and lectures. Jane now has a visual link to Lismore and Murwillumbah sites for regular staff, and strategic meetings. The education stream now links via videoconferencing for a monthly planning meeting which helps to eliminate the isolation sometimes experienced when working from a remote campus.

STUDENT UPDATE:

Nursing and medical students have completed their clinical rotations in both the hospital, mental and community health settings. All students have commented that they have been exposed to a wide variety of clinical experiences and have found all preceptors and clinicians excellent and very willing to teach. Students who had not been to a rural area before commented that they actually “got to see and do more” in Grafton than in some of the larger metropolitan health services.

ACCOMMODATION UPDATE:

Planning has commenced for the upgrade and refurbishment of 10 student rooms in the hospital accommodation centre. This has been funded by the Commonwealth Department of Health and Ageing and was secured as part of a grant for the Lismore site.

NRUDRH — Murwillumbah Campus— Conference success

“Pain Management”

Sixty-five health professionals, representative of the Tweed Valley, attended a Pain Management Conference hosted by Northern Rivers University Department of Rural Health, Murwillumbah Campus.

The conference was a result of an education needs assessment carried out by Naree Hancock of Murwillumbah in consultation with local medical, allied health and nursing staff. The Tweed Valley Division of General Practice confirmed the need for pain management education.

Dr John Moran, Associate Lecturer assisted in sourcing presenters. Presenters included:- Dr Allan McKillop, (Specialist Anesthetist), Dr Joanne Doran, (Palliative Care Specialist), Professor Chris Del Mar (Dean of Medicine Bond University), Dr Sue Page, (Director of Education NRUDRH/ President RDAA), Mr. Damien Finnis, (Physiotherapist Royal North Shore Pain & Research Centre), and Mr. David Beveridge.

The conference structure included combined presentations and workshop groups. Thirteen RACGP QA and CPD points, and 22.5 PDP ACRRM education points were allocated per GP attendee.

Feedback received has been excellent and there is strong interest in NRUDRH hosting an educational conference on an annual basis. Planning has commenced for a conference to be held in the first half of 2005. Suggested subject areas to date include: Advances in Cardiology Interventions, Dermatological Interventions, In Vitro Fertilization, Liver Lesions, Women’s Health, Adolescent Depression (psychiatric intervention), Evidence Based Practice (how to practice in a non-academic environment).



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Talking/Teaching Conference November 04

This workshop style conference provided a networking hands-on atmosphere over a two day period. Day one provided up-to-date information on *Team Approaches to Learning; Presenting with Panache; Teaching Aboriginal Health; Emergency! Teaching Surviving Skills; and Publish or Perish, just to name a few.* Day two of the program focused on **“Teaching on the run”** an interactive series of talks designed to help clinical teachers recognise opportunities for teaching in various clinical settings, encourage more incidental teaching and building confidence to enable sharing and more effective learning experiences for students.

“Don’t just talk, or even just teach. Instead learn how to lead:

- **Establish direction or vision**
- **Align people to that vision and**
- **Mobilise, motivate and inspire”**

Jay Conger.

Speakers for the conference included Professor Bruce Armstrong and Professor Deborah Saltman from the University of Sydney, and local leaders in their fields Baf Kuka, NSW Ambulance Service; Dr David Roland, Clinical Psychologist and Luke Schultz, Physiotherapist, Lismore Base Hospital.

Research Seminar Series Success

Following a successful Seminar Series in 2004 we are increasing our program to incorporate the following:

Date	Topic	Presenters
Tuesday 12.15—1.15pm		
8th Feb	Evaluation of Child safety on Farms Project Community acquired MRSA	Laurie Stiller—Moree Cath Kennedy—Broken Hill
8th March	Ward change over Working on Vanuatu’s health Plan	Zoe Guinea Tweed Hosp Dr Sue Page
12th April	Obesity Management Reflective Practice in Nursing	Dr Andrew Binns & SCU Lou Ward NCAHS
Wednesday 4—5 pm		
23rd Feb	NCAHS Ambulatory Care Service Plan	Pip Parsons, Project officer Pop. Health and Planning
23rd March	Treas. Inter-generational Report— Health projections 2040	Ass Prof Deborah Schofield Aust Rural Health Research Collaboration
27th April	Water Quality in Drought	Bill Balding, Dir. Public Health Far West AHS

The seminars can be video-conferenced on request to sites in Murwillumbah, Grafton and Tweed. If you wish to attend a seminar please contact Catherine Rosenbaum, Executive Assistant, NRUDRH Ph: (02) 6620 7231 Fax: (02) 6620 7270.
Email: catherineq@med.usyd.edu.au.