



NZRGPN Press Release: Peter Snow Memorial Award 2015

Rural hospital doctor receives Peter Snow Award

The 2015 Peter Snow Memorial Award has gone to Dr Katharina Blattner, a rural hospital doctor based in the Hokianga.

The award was announced at the New Zealand Rural General Practice Network's annual conference in Rotorua (March 12-15). Dr Blattner was presented with the award by one of last year's winners, former mid-wife Kim Gosman.

Dr Blattner was nominated under the "Innovation or Service" category.

Her nomination was based on her work in her primary work place in Hokianga, her work as one of the lead organizers for the Postgraduate Diploma in Rural and Provincial Hospital Medicine and also as a primary instigator of the DRMNZ/Cook Islands Initiative.

Dr Blattner is committed to the concept of excellence in provision of clinical care in rural New Zealand hospitals. She is particularly committed to the value of integrated primary and secondary care and the role of rural GPs in the provision of hospital based care. She has worked for Hauora Hokianga since 2004 and in that capacity has been the lead clinician for the hospital in patient facility as well as working in rural General Practice.

During 10 years she has been instrumental in advancing the diagnostic capabilities of Rawene Hospital and also of performing the research which demonstrates the usefulness of these capabilities in terms of both clinical management and also the provision of patient-centred care so that patients can be managed in their local environment safely where possible (thereby saving travel and expense to patients and their whanau and also reducing costs to the local base hospital). This has meant that patients can essentially remain in an extended version of their own homes where possible and that clinicians can know that the care they are providing is appropriate and does not compromise or disadvantage their patients.

This research included the introduction and audit of Point of Care Testing to Rawene Hospital, the introduction and audit of Clinician Performed Ultrasound in Rawene Hospital and an audit of the value of Exercise Tolerance Tests performed in small hospitals. Her research also involved an analysis of the effectiveness of Streptokinase as thrombolytic therapy in a population which is largely Maori and established that Streptokinase was less likely to be effective in this population (a finding which led to the use of a different thrombolytic regimen for Hokianga's practice population).

Dr Blattner is also a Senior Lecturer in the Otago Medical School and has been one of the clinicians who have been instrumental in the development of Rural Hospital Medicine as a new scope of practice in New Zealand. She is passionate about providing excellent care to rural patients in rural hospitals and thereby minimising the risks posed by isolation and distance from secondary and tertiary hospital care.

She is an enthusiastic teacher not only of rural hospital registrars but also of up and coming doctors (via the University of Auckland's rural medicine program for fifth year medical students- the Pukawakawa program. In this role she has been involved in an analysis of the students' experience of the immersion program and specifically of their experience in Hokianga over the five years that the program has been in place).

Dr Blattner is a standard bearer for rural hospital medicine and her commitment to both research and rural hospital medicine has meant that the value of rural medicine, the value of rural hospitals and the value of research into her fields of study have kept the profile of rural New Zealand high and has helped to maximise the possibility of New Zealand doctors choosing rural medicine as a satisfying career pathway.

About the award

The Peter Snow Memorial Award was set up to honour the life and work of Dr Peter Snow who passed away in March 2006. Dr Snow was a rural general practitioner based in Tapanui. As well as caring for his patients Peter was Past-President of the Royal New Zealand College of General Practitioners and was a member of the Otago Hospital Board and District Health Board. He was enthusiastic and active in seeking knowledge to improve the health and safety of rural communities. His work contributed to the identification of the chronic fatigue syndrome and he was influential in raising safety awareness on issues related to farming accidents.

Previous winners include:

Inaugural winner Dr Ron Janes (2007)
Nurse Jean Ross and Dr Pat Farry (2008 – jointly awarded)
Dr Garry Nixon (2009)
Dr Tim Malloy (2010)
Dr Martin London (2011)
Nurse Kirsty Murrell-McMillan (2012)
Dr Graeme Fenton and NZIRH CE Robin Steed (2013)
Kim Gosman and Dr Janne Bills (2014).

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