

network news

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Innovative group of Northland GPs rewarded

The small communities of Kawakawa, Moerewa, Doubtless Bay and Kaitaia in Northland have been awarded funding from the Ministry of Health's Rural Innovations Fund (RIF).



Aniva Lawrence, Jayda and Dayna Ruka and James Aiona, a medical student from Auckland University, at the Kawakawa Medical Centre

The collaboration of GPs is one of six groups to be allocated money from the RIF's allocation for the 2006/07 financial year.

The group has put the money towards establishing a coordinator role to organise, assist and support medical students and locums in engaging with local community while on placement in Northland.

Like many New Zealand rural communities, the practices in this region struggle to retain and recruit doctors. The communities hope that placing more students in the area, and ensuring they feel comfortable in the district and enjoy their time, will eventually achieve



Aniva Lawrence (blue hat) and Mike Yang (white hat), a medical student from Auckland University

a flow-on effect of attracting more GPs to the area.

Aniva Lawrence, a GP from Kawakawa Medical Centre, led the funding application and said they have high hopes for the impact the coordinator role will have on the area.

"Although we probably won't see any long-term effects for a couple of years, when students start to graduate and choose permanent placements, we believe the cost of providing the coordination service is fairly low compared with the potentially big outcomes," said Aniva.

Because the coordinator now organises the students and their placements, it means GPs can spend more time mentoring the students - time they would have spent doing paperwork.

"Dayna Ruka, our new coordinator, has been fantastic!

"We really wanted someone who knew the area, could build a database of hobbies and activities for the students, and help to raise the profile of our community and its needs.

"And Dayna has been doing just that. Everything has just fallen into place and enabled us to free up more time to do what really matters," said Aniva.

The community has already increased the number of students on placements from last year. And Dayna has been instrumental in achieving this.

During January, a busy time of year for the practices, they had two students arrive. Dayna was able to coordinate their placements so they were split between two of the practices – a first for the community.

"We would never have been able to do this if we weren't working as a collaborative.

"Having a coordinator has simply taken the pressure off the doctors. It has meant we can increase the number of students or doctors we take on placements because we can accommodate them more and, by rotating them through the practices, ensure we don't overload our GPs."

Two of the practices within the collaboration are solo GPs. Part of the funding has gone towards employing locums to cover their work when they spend time with students.

As part of the project, Aniva and her fellow GPs will survey each student for their feedback on the coordination service.

Innovative group of Northland GPs rewarded *continued from page 1*

"We hope the survey will give us some concrete results to support the need for a coordinator in the area. The feedback we have had so far from the University of Auckland has been extremely positive.

"Ideally we hope the more students we place in the area, the more we will encourage graduating doctors to return to Northland and ultimately to work in rural practice."

The coordinator role is a great initiative and the Network would like to congratulate the Northland practices on

securing this funding. We keenly support and promote innovation in rural general practice.

Applications for the 2007/08 financial year close on 31 March 2007. We encourage other groups or practices from all areas of NZ to apply.

More information on the Rural Innovation Fund can be found at www.moh.govt.nz/moh.nsf/indexmh/rural-innovations-fund.

Network Conference 2007 – "Growing Health at Grass Roots!"

Have a passion for rural health? SKYCITY Convention Centre, Auckland, is the place to be on 30 March – 1 April 2007!

Momentum is building as the 2007 Network conference fast approaches. Registrations have been steadily flowing in but it's not too late to get involved.

The 2007 Network Conference caters for a wide audience and incorporates an exciting array of practical and clinical workshops that have been carefully drawn together from all sectors of rural health to form the Network's most extensive programme yet.

Additions to the programme not featured in the registration brochure are:

- A surprise group of international keynotes demonstrating telemedicine live from Nevada University.
- Professor Campbell Murdoch, University of Western Australia, presenting "The Bush Academy".
- RNZCGP/Universities would like to encourage anyone with an interest in teaching the rural GPs of the future to register for their education workshops.

The conference has also been endorsed by RNZCGP and approved for up to 15.5 hours (= up to 31 credits for Advanced Vocational Education (AVE) and Maintenance of Professional Standards (MOPS) purposes).

All nurses and GPs will receive a certificate of attendance.

To register online and/or download a registration brochure, visit the 'Conference' page at www.rgpn.org.nz.

Partners and children won't miss out either - while you are at the conference they can enjoy an exhilarating day of activities.

The partners' programme includes a presentation by Sue Burton on the issues facing doctors' families, tai chi with the delegates, and a choice of several exciting excursion options, including a harbour tour, wine trail, Sky Tower vertigo climb and many other activities.

Or, ensure your time at the conference is stress and worry-free by booking your kids into the fun-filled children's programme. Relax at the conference knowing they are in the safe hands of nannies, enjoying the movies, the zoo, Rainbows End or MOTAT (Museum of Transport and Technology).

For more information on the partners' and children's options, and the social programme for delegates, visit www.rgpn.org.nz.

The steering committee would like to acknowledge all our sponsors and exhibitors who have made the conference possible. In particular, we would like to give special thanks to Weinmann Medical Technology, our premier sponsor, and GlaxoSmithKline, our dinner sponsor.

In addition, several medical students have received generous sponsorship to attend the conference. This



Sky Jump's expansive view

Network Conference 2007 - "Growing Health at Grass Roots !" *continued from page 2*

includes eight students whose registration fees will be sponsored by the Network.

And don't forget the Expo! The expo is a highlight of the conference and will feature a varied selection of exhibitors showcasing state-of-the-art technology, products and services.

The expo area will also be the venue for all conference breaks and the Welcome Cocktail function.

Remember it's not too late to get involved!

Members register online now. Not a Network member? Join now and take advantage of member discounts for conference registration.

For Network membership benefits, and an online membership application form, visit the 'Join the Network' page on www.rgpn.org.nz.

Further enquiries regarding the conference can be addressed to Pamm Wilson at pamm@rgpn.org.nz or 04 495 5877.



Westhaven Marina

Images courtesy of Tourism Auckland

Please support the Network in our dream of "inspiring New Zealand with our passion for rural health" and register now to experience the diversity of New Zealand's biggest rural health gathering.

Initial findings from Rural Funding Questionnaire

Initial findings from the Rural Funding Questionnaire suggest there are some issues associated with each of the rural funding streams.

Early trends show that many practices are confused about the level of funding that they are entitled to receive or actually receive. This appears to be often due to a lack of detailed information from DHBs or PHOs on the practice's entitlements or actual payments received.

Feedback from many practices also indicates a strong support for payment of rural premium funding (workforce retention) directly to practices – rather than through DHBs and PHOs.

The Network commissioned the questionnaire in response to anecdotal evidence that suggested some DHBs and/or PHOs may be withholding significant amounts of rural funding (that has been earmarked by government for supporting rural general practice) for other purposes.

Conway Powell, Centre for Business Development, was contracted to develop the confidential Rural Funding Questionnaire to send to all rural general practices.

The purpose of the questionnaire was to identify what proportion of rural funding is actually being received by rural general practitioners and general

practices from the three rural support funding streams:

- rural bonus
- rural premium – workforce retention, and;
- rural premium – reasonable rostering.

This information would then be compared with the total level of funding made available through the Ministry of Health/DHBs to PHOs which, in turn, would highlight the level of funding getting through (or not) to rural general practice.

With a complete picture of the rural funding pattern across the entire country, the Network will have solid evidence on which to base an appropriate approach to government.

We have had a good response from practices to the questionnaire. So far we have received well over 100 responses from the 221 practices sent the questionnaire and more are trickling in each day. Although the closing date for receiving responses has passed, we will still accept completed questionnaires as we are keen to hear from as many practices as possible.

All responses and information gathered is entirely confidential and no individual practices will be identified in the reports.

Conway will be presenting the findings of the questionnaire at the Network's 2007 Conference.

NZLocums attends BMJ Careers Fair

"The BMJ Careers Fair was a great success," said NZLocums consultant, Sean Hill.

Julie Thorburn, NZLocums consultant, and Sean attended the BMJ Careers Fair in London at the end of last year.

The expo was held over two days and was attended by international medical graduates of all ages and an increasing number of older UK graduates.

The NZLocums stand was one of a number of exhibitors at the event including; other recruiters/locum agencies, employers (mainly National Health Service (NHS) Trust), branches of the British Armed Forces and various UK medical and surgical colleges.

Sean said he and Julie had returned to New Zealand with over 100 contacts to follow up on.

"The event was extremely busy. At points we were overwhelmed with people wanting to talk about coming to New Zealand on both a short and long-term basis.

"Many of the younger practitioners sought information on possible career options with employment and post-graduate training," said Sean.

"While the older UK practitioners discussed options for moving overseas."



Julie Thorburn talks to a prospective candidate at the BMJ Careers Fair

Sean said a large number of the people visiting their stand spoke of a growing dissatisfaction with the NHS and the confused introduction of competence and career programmes being phased in for all practitioners.

Others spoke of the difficulty accessing some training schemes and general dissatisfaction with life in the UK.

Sean and Julie were joined at the stand by UK GP, Nick Cartmell. Nick had previously practised in New Zealand as a locum with NZLocums and was preparing to return to New Zealand on a long-term basis.

"Nick was fantastic. He was able to tell visitors first-hand what living in New Zealand was like, from both a clinical practise and lifestyle point of view."

Sean noted that there seemed to be less GPs at the event compared to previous years. However, this was countered by the number of young hospital-based doctors looking to relocate and enter general practice training in New Zealand.

"It's a great event that always pays dividends on our return.

"We look forward to attending the BMJ Careers Fair at the end of the year."



Julie Thorburn and Dr Nick Cartmell talk to a prospective candidate at the BMJ Careers Fair

New recruits

NZLocums runs an orientation programme for all overseas-trained doctors when they arrive in New Zealand, before they are placed in rural practices as short-term locums and long-term/permanent recruits.

To the right are some photos of our new recruits, taken at recent NZLocums orientations - they are:

- **Becky Greaves** (UK) – Becky has taken a three month placement in the Wairarapa, working between Martinborough and Featherston Medical Centres.
- **Adrian Scott** (UK) – Adrian has taken a three month placement at Oamaru.
- **Diana Yee** (Canada) – Diana is working as a roving locum for three months, starting at Rawene then heading to Stratford.



Diana Yee



Becky Greaves and Adrian Scott

Fate lands Dutch GP in Bay of Islands

"It was such a coincidence that it just had to be fate," exclaimed Taco Kistemaker.

Taco, a Dutch GP, was referring to the NZLocums advertisement he spotted while reading a weekly medical journal.

Just days before, Taco and his wife Simone, who were travelling around Botswana and Namibia, had been pondering their future or, more specifically, discussing the option of locuming in New Zealand.

Taco had recently been offered the chance to take over a surgery in Groningen, a city around the same size as Wellington. However, the long term commitment required by GPs to surgeries in the Netherlands, and a desire to do more travelling, meant he and Simone had declined the offer.

After spotting the NZLocums ad and browsing its website, Taco contacted the organisation and things "just fell into place".

NZLocums then put them in touch with locums from three of their preferred destinations.

"We had never been to New Zealand before, so this was great because it meant we could make an informed choice about where we went."

It also helped Taco and Simone to get to know other locums in New Zealand, several of whom they have since visited.

"The NZLocums team was brilliant. They were very helpful and extremely well organised throughout the whole relocation process," said Taco.

The couple arrived in November last year and moved to Kerikeri in the Bay of Islands. Taco commutes to Broadway Health Centre in Kaikohe where he has a three-year contract.

And the couple can't say enough about their new surroundings.

"In the Netherlands there are 17 million people packed into a country a seventh of the size of New Zealand – it seems to make people grumpy. Over here everyone is so much more relaxed and friendly."

"The NZLocums team was brilliant. They were very helpful and extremely well organised throughout the whole relocation process."

Taco and Simone are adapting well to the kiwi lifestyle. They have been to many BBQs and have also bought a boat which they are enjoying using for fishing and diving in the weekends.

"People say this is the worst summer ever but it's the best I have experienced in my 34 years – I think it's fantastic, I'm outside all the time."



Simone, Taco and Ruben Kistemaker

Taco also takes particular pride in his vegetable garden.

"The soil is amazing here – anything grows! I love my garden – I have lettuces, beans, peas, broccoli, carrots, onions and heaps of herbs," said Taco, who has even been spotted gardening in the rain!

The hours he works are similar to in the Netherlands and the pay is considerably less, but Taco says this pales in comparison to the great lifestyle that New Zealand offers.

"I have a standard of living in New Zealand that I could never ever afford in the Netherlands."

In addition to moving to the other side of the world, Taco and Simone have had another huge change to adapt to in their lives – baby Ruben was born in January.

A trip home is planned in August to show him off to friends and family.

In the longer-term, Taco and Simone are in no hurry to move back home. Simone, a hand specialist in the Netherlands, would also like to find work in New Zealand.

"Right now I can't see myself back in the Netherlands", said Taco.

"I love the friendly, relaxed lifestyle we have over here.

"I felt like there was something missing from our lives in the Netherlands and I have found it in New Zealand."

First ever national Nurse Practitioner conference

The first ever national nurse practitioner conference, *Best practice in prescribing: first nurse practitioner conference*, was held in Dunedin in November last year.

The inaugural event was hosted by Otago Polytechnic and was declared a huge success by the New Zealand nursing community.

Conference coordinator and principal lecturer, Jean Ross, said the event is being viewed by nurse leaders as a template for ongoing professional continuing education conferences in the future.

"The feedback has been wonderful.

"What started as a simple workshop idea to up-skill nurses, turned into something much bigger than we ever anticipated."

Jean credited her fellow coordinator, Ken Wysocki, with seeing the potential of opening up the workshop idea and making it into a national conference.

"Ken saw the bigger picture. But I don't think even he thought we would have over 75 nurses, nurse practitioners, and potential nurse practitioners attend!"

Opened by Hon Pete Hodgson, the event had an overall theme that focused on prescribing and best practice.

Five of the 27 current nurse practitioners in New Zealand were showcased and presented on topics ranging from neonatal, Maori and mental health, to rural primary health care and men's health.

"The presenting nurse practitioners were all from completely different practices including; rural and urban, and hospital and primary health care," said Jean.

Paula Renouf, a nurse practitioner from the Child and Family Health Trust in Manurewa, was the keynote speaker. She spoke on the importance of a broad base of diagnostic knowledge and collaboration when prescribing in primary care.

Continuing education sessions were presented by Bernadette Forde, Deborah Harris, Ken Wysocki and Adrienne Murray.

"The workshop sessions were a wonderful opportunity for attendees to hear how different nurse practitioners practised."

"The workshop sessions were a wonderful opportunity for attendees to hear how different nurse practitioners practised," said Jean.

Each of the presenters described their scope of practice and how they practised, and then presented two-three examples of their cases to discuss, debate and see where the evidence was to manage the prescribing.



Attendees at the inaugural nurse practitioner conference

Joanne Patterson, a rural nurse specialist for the West Coast District Health Board, said the presenting nurse practitioners were inspirational.

"They are role models who are at the forefront of a growing group of people working in advanced nursing.

"There was an excellent cross section of people, both presenting and attending, who are all forging a new direction in the delivery of nursing care," said Joanne.

Joanne also noted the conference had been a great opportunity to network.

"It was fantastic. Current nurse practitioners and soon-to-be nurse practitioners, like myself, were all able to chat, support each other, discuss reforms in the health service and share research and ideas."

In addition, attendees were invited to present a research poster to their colleagues on evidence-based practice in health care management and education.

Joanne, who presented a poster to illustrate her research on clinical decision making by nurse practitioners, said the presentations had provided invaluable feedback.

"The posters were great. It meant presenters were able to share their work with like-minded contemporaries and add the evidence to their portfolios," said Jean.

Jean says they received an enormous amount of feedback on the posters but also on the whole conference.

"It was a fantastic success and we hope very much that another organisation will choose to run it later this year."

Negotiations are now in progress for a different tertiary education institution to host the conference in November 2007.

"There was an excellent cross section of people ... who are all forging a new direction in the delivery of nursing care."

WONCA conference offers insights on rural retention

"The conference had relevance and lessons for all disciplines of rural health care professionals in New Zealand," said Kirsty Murrell-McMillan.

Kirsty, a member of the Network's Executive and rural nurse specialist, and Adrienne Steele, Chief Executive, represented the Network at the 7th World Organization of Family Doctors (WONCA) Rural Health Conference held at Washington University in Seattle, in September of last year.

Kirsty said the conference offered solutions to the current crisis – retention of health professionals and services – facing many rural New Zealand communities.

"The speakers made a strong emphasis on development of rural curriculum in medical programmes and how this influenced both the retention and returning of practitioners to work in rural areas.

"There were also a number of presentations around telemedicine and the use of blackberries, pod casting and rural-specific online educational material.

The *Transforming Rural Practice through Education* themed conference was attended by representatives from around the world, including a strong delegation from Australia.

"It was an excellent opportunity for networking with international colleagues involved in rural education.

"Both Adrienne and I were very grateful to Professor Campbell Murdoch, University of Western Australia, for looking after and 'hosting' us at the conference."

A report of the conference will be available on the Network website in the near future. In the meantime, many of the main presentations are available online at www.ruralwonca2006.org.

Seeking nurses with completed masters dissertation or thesis with a rural focus

Jean Ross is seeking nurses who have completed a masters dissertation or thesis with a rural focus such as rural nursing practice, rural delivery of health care or rural culture.

With funding provided through the Ministry of Health's Rural Innovations Fund, Jean is developing a rural text for New Zealand.

If you are a nurse who falls into the above category and are willing to contribute (with assistance from a professional editor) by condensing your dissertation or thesis into a chapter for the text, please contact Jean ASAP, at jeanr@tekotago.ac.nz or 03 479 6107 or 03 473 0402.

Aotearoa Rural Health Apprentices report

The Aotearoa Rural Health Apprentices' (ARHA) first major project, a summer research studentship, is now underway. This was funded by a generous grant from the Ministry of Health's Rural Innovations Fund.

William Perry, a fourth year medical student at the Christchurch School of Medicine, was chosen (with help from the Network) to undertake the studentship.

The basis of the research is to produce a survey of attitudes towards rural health education and workforce issues. Those being surveyed include; medical students, junior doctors, GPs in training and current rural practitioners.

The aim is to quantify some of the anecdotal evidence about health professionals' attitudes to rural health. This, combined with an in-depth literature and news study, will form the basis of a rural health 'solutions document'.

We hope this will take the form of a casebook, with conclusions drawn from the survey and personal anecdotes of the current obstacles to rural health

education and workforce issues.

Ultimately we hope to build a bank of ideas to provide an 'outside the square' approach to addressing these issues. Ideally this will become a future resource for all rural health stakeholders, especially those at a medical education level, and help promote rural health as a career for the next wave of health providers.

The survey is now available online, and if you have not received notice of it already, please take five minutes to fill it in at www.arha.org.nz/quask/survey.htm - your support is greatly appreciated. ARHA hopes to have the project completed by late April, and will distribute the casebook accordingly.

Once more ARHA would like to extend its wholehearted thanks to Adrienne Steele, Dr Tim Malloy and the entire Network team for their continuing support of all our efforts.

Brad Stone, President, ARHA 2007

Network activities

Some of the recent activities the Network has undertaken on behalf of its members include:

General

- Rural Funding Questionnaire – Conway Powell is analysing responses and will be reporting his findings at the Network's 2007 Conference on 30 March 2007 (see article page 3).
- Nurse Practitioner Research – Kirsty Murrell-McMillan and Kim Gosman are continuing work on this research, which is awaiting ethical approval.
- Nursing Practice Visits – North Island nurses can expect to see Kirsty and Kim, and hopefully Mark Jones (Ministry of Health Chief Nurse), when they visit practices in the north as part of this research.

Representation

- PRIME Advisory Committee – Dr Tim Malloy and Kirsty Murrell-McMillan (South Island nurse representative) attended a meeting of the reconvened committee to

look at the Service Specifications. The next meeting will take place in March.

- Rural Ranking Scale Review Working Group – Dr Tim Malloy (Network chair) and Rachel Hale (North Island nurse representative) attended the first meeting of the working group in February. The next meeting will take place in March.
- Expert Advisory Group for a Sector Disposition Tool – Kirsty Murrell-McMillan (South Island nurse representative) attended a meeting of this group in February. Dr Andy Minett (western North Island representative) will join Kirsty on this group, to provide input on this project from both a rural nurse and GP perspective.

We also continue to be actively involved with the GPLF, GP Council, ACC Liaison Group and various other inter-agency project groups on issues affecting the rural health workforce.

Executive Committee opportunities

The Executive Committee is calling for expressions of interest from members for three Committee vacancies representing the following regions:

- Southern **North** Island – south of Taihape, coast to coast
- Northern **South** Island – north of Ashburton, coast to coast
- Southern **South** Island – south of Ashburton, coast to coast

Please send your details to Steph Fink at the Network office steph@rgpn.org.nz or 04 495 5874, by **23 March 2007**. The Executive will announce the appointments at the Network's 2007 AGM.

Members' diary note – AGM

The Network's Annual General Meeting will be held during the Network's 2007 conference on Saturday, 31 March 2007.

It will take place immediately after the awards ceremony. Further details about the AGM will be provided to members in advance of the meeting.

*Contact the Network at network@rgpn.org.nz
if you would like to receive our newsletter and/or e-zine.*