Dear Students of the Extended Rural Cohort

The School of Rural Health at Monash University (known as Monash Rural Health) would like to welcome you to the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences as members of the Extended Rural Cohort (ERC).

Congratulations on successfully gaining a place in the Bachelor of Medical Science and Doctor of Medicine (MD) course at Monash University which will provide you with unique perspectives about the health of regional and rural Australian communities. At the same time, you’ll enjoy a medical education program that is unsurpassed in clinical skills teaching and gives you the chance to experience continuity of health care: you might meet an expectant mother and follow her through to the baby’s birth.

Your locations
As an ERC student, you will spend the first two years of your five-year degree at the Monash campus in Clayton and most of the next three years at Monash Rural Health training sites in rural and regional Victoria. We are aware that our ERC students, who have been carefully selected for medical training in rural and regional Victoria, may have relatively little contact with our regional sites and the academic staff who run them until the end of their second year of training.

You’ll have an excellent educational experience at Clayton and will be under the careful mentorship of our trusted colleagues on the central campus, which include the school’s Rural Health Education Program staff.

Meeting you all
Nevertheless, we are keen to ensure that you all have some contact with the sites and staff that will have a key role in your medical education and in your personal development as future health professionals. There will almost certainly be some curiosity and excitement in your group about this program. There may also be some questions for which we can provide helpful information in your early years at Monash.

For all these reasons we are keen to meet all of you as early in your course as possible and to make a start with the process of getting to know you. This booklet is an easy and accessible explanation of the program and provides answers to some of the most burning questions that have been asked by previous students.

Information when you need it
We expect to follow up with regular communication via Moodle as well as one or two face-to-face gatherings at Monash, Clayton, during your first two years. During COVID restrictions, and as required, we will be running regular Town Hall meetings during Semester 1.

This will give you the opportunity to discuss all aspects of the program and to deal with any special requirements or requests that you may have as you prepare to spend those very important years of clinical training with us.

During Years 2 and 3 when you need to submit your preferences for long-term regional and rural clinical placements, we will also distribute specific information to you with details of clinical training opportunities at our rural and regional training sites.

We are all greatly invested in this program and have a special interest in ensuring that each of you grows individually and as a group and in assisting you to become the best doctors this University can produce. We look forward very much to meeting all of you and to getting to know you in the very near future.

Laura Major
Rural Health Education Manager
Monash Rural Health
Year 1 Introduction to Regional, Rural and Remote Health

Your introduction to regional, rural and remote health is designed to introduce you to different rural health contexts and is an integrated component of the Monash MD at Monash, Clayton. Through participation in interactive educational activities, you will develop an awareness of regional, rural and remote health, practice and communities. The program takes place at Monash University Clayton and comprises a series of interactive educational activities with a rural health focus undertaken during Week 4 in Semester 2.

Year 2 Rural/Regional Placement

The faculty has long been committed to exposing students to regional and rural settings early in their training, with the aim of encouraging you to consider regional and rural clinical training options and ultimately a career practising medicine in a regional or rural setting. During your two-week rural/regional placement you will be located at Monash Rural Health teaching sites across north-west and south-east regional and rural Victoria, and participate in a range of rural health clinical and community-based activities offering a range of learning opportunities.

The Year 2 rural/regional placement program offers you your first opportunity to practise and develop your clinical skills and increase your knowledge of regional and rural health service delivery systems. Our objective is to broaden your knowledge of regional and rural communities which, in turn, will help you in your medical profession when caring for patients from regional and rural areas.

In Year 2, you’ll spend two weeks at one of our regional sites in north-west or south-east Victoria.
Year 3B
Year 3B offers the first opportunity for you to immerse yourself in the clinical environment where you can consolidate the knowledge you have developed in Years 1 and 2.

Your clinical learning environment will be with a regional hospital co-located with our sites in Mildura, Bendigo, Warragul or Traralgon or Sale.

The curriculum for Year 3B is an integrated medicine/surgery curriculum based on the four themes of the medical curriculum. The delivery of 3B across the school is structured and maximises teaching and learning opportunities at each site.

Small group activities are a feature and you will participate in a range of student-centred learning activities that include clinical bedside teaching, ward and operating theatre experience, problem-based learning (PBL) using paper and real patient cases, as well as theme-based teaching.

The curriculum is delivered at multiple sites across regional locations and you will have the opportunity to participate in a transition week which is aimed at preparing you for the teaching and learning in clinical environments.

On completion of Year 3B you must be capable of undertaking history and clinical examination of patients with straightforward conditions, of integrating medical and surgical approaches, of using pathological concepts and of understanding patients’ perspectives on their illness. You must also be capable of extending these skills to more complex patient problems and be capable of accessing and appraising evidence for the clinical decisions you observe.

To become competent in these areas, Monash Rural Health expects that students will demonstrate professionalism and team work while participating to their fullest capacity in organised and timetabled activities.

Year 4C
The Year 4C program is largely taken up with the core clinical rotations of women’s health, children’s health, general practice and psychiatry.

These full-year regional and rural placements are undertaken through regional and rural hospitals, general practices and a wide range of community based centres. You’ll spend one semester based at a regional hospital and the other in a rural community general practice.

This program will give you opportunities to learn about each of the disciplines at different levels in the health care system. For example, you may spend one semester in Woodend under the supervision of a procedural GP participating in a busy obstetric service in a small community hospital and the next semester in Traralgon under the supervision of a group of obstetricians and gynaecologists in a very busy regional specialist hospital. You will have similar experiences with the other disciplines in both rural and regional settings.

While on a rural practice community rotation you will see many patients yourself and will have the opportunity to deeply understand the challenges and rewards facing GPs with responsibility for the total care of patients in their communities.

On the regional hospital rotation you will have contact with both specialists and GPs and will gain a good understanding of the relationships between specialists and generalists working together to provide collaborative care for both local and referred patients.

Year 5D
The final year of the medicine course is largely hospital based and facilitates your transition into the medical workplace as interns. You will participate in a range of learning experiences which are designed to substantially enhance your clinical reasoning, diagnostic and case management skills.

It aims to graduate doctors who are knowledgeable, skillful, reflective and compassionate; and to lay the foundations for future training and lifelong learning in medicine.

Undertaking some of your Year 5D clinical rotations in a regional setting offers you another opportunity to experience regional practice in your final year of the medical course.

During Year 5D you will complete six six-week rotations. The six rotations consist of five core clinical rotations (Medicine, Surgery, Emergency Medicine, Aged Care, and Speciality), and a Scholarly Intensive Placement (SIP). You’ll start preparing for this SIP in Year 3B when you’ll be introduced to scholarly work and research skills.

As an ERC student, you will spend two of your five core rotations in one or more of our regional clinical training sites. The remaining three can be undertaken in Monash metropolitan clinical settings.

It is important for you to understand the entire health care experience of patients and the activities and learning experiences have been designed to foster such an understanding.
How many students are in the ERC stream?
Each year there are 30 Commonwealth Supported Places (CSP) in the Monash ERC stream.

Do I get to choose where I go for clinical placements?
You will be asked to nominate your preference for regional and/or rural training sites. You will spend time in both our regional training sites and our rural community sites. There are many logistical issues to consider when allocating students, so while the University tries to accommodate those preferences, we cannot always do so. If you have any questions about placements, your first point of contact is Mark Woodfield in the Monash Rural Health Clayton office which is located on the 1st Floor, 37 Rainforest Walk (Building 13A) at Monash University’s Clayton campus.

When do I make my choice?
In the second semester of Years 2, 3B and 4C you’ll be asked to nominate your preferences for clinical placements in Years 3B, 4C and 5D.

Where will I live?
Accommodation in rural and regional communities is either college-style or houses/units located close to the hospitals and general practices where you will be placed.

What will it cost and how will I be charged?
The Accommodation Rental Fee is currently $105/week for long-term placements in Years 3B and 4C, and $70/week for short-term placements in Year 5D. This fee is reviewed annually. The fee will be charged to your student account and you’ll receive a monthly invoice. You can choose a range of methods to pay.

Further information
If you have questions about any aspect of your clinical training across all years, start with the Rural Health Education Program office which is located within the Monash Rural Health office on the Clayton campus, First floor, 37 Rainforest Walk (Building 13A).

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