Director’s Report

I would like to take the opportunity to outline two major developments within the East Gippsland Regional Clinical School in this report.

Firstly, on Friday 8 April, Judi Walker, Jane Greacen and I attended the launch of the Harvest Alliance Monash University School for Indigenous Health, held in Melbourne at the Koori Heritage Trust in King Street.

The launch of this School has been made possible by an extraordinarily generous bequeath of more than $10 million to the University from the Harvest Alliance Foundation, a philanthropic organisation established by the Rancie family in Melbourne.

The School for Indigenous Health, as part of the Faculty of Medicine, Nursing and Health Sciences, will have responsibility for ensuring appropriate curriculum regarding Aboriginal Health is included in all programs offered by the Faculty, as well as working with Aboriginal communities across Victoria to facilitate entry of increased numbers of Aboriginal people into health-related courses within the University.

At the launch, Dean of the Faculty Professor Steve Wesselingh described this initiative as the most important achievement of his tenure as Dean.

The aims of the School For Indigenous Health are closely aligned to those of the East Gippsland School for Aboriginal Health Professionals (EGSAHP), which was established three years ago by a group of local community members, with the support of the East Gippsland Regional Clinical School. This support has largely been provided by Dr Jane Greacen, Senior Lecturer with EGRCS.

EGSAHP has developed a research project to examine the support requirements for local Aboriginal school children to enable their entry into tertiary health-related courses. This research project has recently been submitted to the Monash University Ethics Committee for approval. We are also in the process of completing the Position Description for an academic appointment to conduct this research and support the EGSAHP Committee and the aims of the School. We hope to advertise for this position within the next month. Office space for the successful appointee will be included in the planned expansion of the EGRCS campus in Bairnsdale.

The second major milestone for the EGRCS is the commencement of nursing training at the Bairnsdale campus from July this year. Initially, up to eight second-year nursing students from the School of Nursing degree course at Monash Churchill, will undertake their program based in the EGRCS in Bairnsdale. This will involve video-conference tutorials and lectures, local clinical skills training in the Skills Laboratory, and clinical placements in health facilities in the local East Gippsland region.

It is planned that this program will be expanded in 2012, enabling larger numbers of local community members to undertake nursing degree (Division One) training locally without the need to travel to the Churchill campus. This will also create opportunities to explore interprofessional education at the undergraduate level, by matching the medical and nursing program curriculums and, where relevant, conducting joint tutorials and clinical skills education.

Both of these developments are important and historical milestones for the East Gippsland Regional Clinical School, and my congratulations are extended to all those who have been involved in making these activities possible.

David Campbell
Director
EGRCS
Manager’s Report

2011 is well underway and for the first time in six years without Jenny Donelly at the helm. Jenny has taken on the position of Interim Operations Manager South East Victoria and although on the road most of the week, she has made her base here in Bairnsdale.

I would like to take this opportunity to thank Jenny for her commitment in supporting rural health. In particular, her dedication to the East Gippsland Regional Clinical School has been outstanding, a highlight being the formation of a very proactive Community Advisory Committee which has led to the establishment (in collaboration with Rotary Sale, Wellington and East Gippsland Shires) of The East Gippsland Regional Clinical School Education Trust. This Trust has made the financial transitions to University for local students accepted to study Medicine with Monash University a little bit easier.

New Programs/Placements

Sale

The Year 4C program has now extended to include Yarram Medical Centre where we have two medical students placed.

Bairnsdale

The Year 4C program now includes Gippsland and East Gippsland Aboriginal Cooperative and Omeo Medical Centre with students rotating through both sites.

These three clinics involved in our program were successful in receiving Rural Education Infrastructure Development Grants for infrastructure development to support medical student training.

East Gippsland Education Trust

Three local year 12 students met the eligibility criteria of the Trust for the 2011 commencement year, coming from all corners of the Shires Port Albert, Mallacoota and Nicholson.

We are thrilled that two of these students could accept the Start Up scholarship of $1000.00 each, and we wish them well with their future studies.

Nursing
In collaboration with Monash University School of Nursing and Midwifery, a pilot program consisting of six students will begin in July 2011 with the delivery of a Division One Nursing Degree at the Bairnsdale campus. This is creating a lot of interest with indications that, should the pilot program prove successful, numbers may need to be capped next year. This collaboration also consolidates our commitment to supporting multi disciplinary rural health education in East Gippsland.

Debra Johnston

2011 East Gippsland Education Trust bursary recipients

The first bursaries of the East Gippsland Education Trust have been announced and recipients are Caroline Severs and Sinead Phillips-O’Kenny both of whom will be studying the Monash MBBS course in Clayton. Caroline was excited to receive the bursary and following are a few words from her.

I graduated from Gippsland Grammar in November 2010, applying to the Monash University Undergraduate Medicine course. In particular, I applied to the Extended Rural Cohort (ERC) which is a group of the cohort who undertake their training in rural and regional Victoria. I chose this section of the cohort as I wish to return to country Victoria to practice as a doctor, most likely to East Gippsland. I would like to train in rural medicine, as a General Practitioner and any other specialty I find interesting and beneficial for a rural community.

I have grown up in East Gippsland, my home is in Johnsonville and I attended the local primary school until 2003 when I started to attend Gippsland Grammar. I travelled to Sale to attend school, remaining living at home, not boarding.

As a local student who wishes to practice here in the future, the East Gippsland Education Trust Scholarship shows me that the local medical community, including the doctors, hospital and regional clinical school are supportive of me in my pursuit of medical studies. This is important in my transition to university as I feel the community has shown its support of me and other local students who are studying medicine.

As a student interested in improving rural and my community’s health, I am proud to be the first recipient of this scholarship, I hope it can continue to support other local students who choose to study medicine and to encourage them to also return to practice in our community.

Caroline Severs
Year 3B Education Report – Sale

The eight Year 3B medical students at Sale have launched themselves enthusiastically into their first clinical year. All students will spend an eight week rotation on both the surgical and medical wards and also a great deal of time in many other areas of the hospital, particularly theatres and the emergency department. In addition, the students on their surgical term have started a dedicated two weeks rotation with the anaesthetic team.

The students will also have opportunities to observe medicine in a General Practice, with tutorials being held at both Heyfield Medical Centre and the Maffra Medical Group. We are also hosting fifteen second year medical students from Monash Clayton for two weeks in May, giving these students a direct experience of rural health services and a better understanding of what it is to live and work in a rural community.

In addition, East Gippsland Regional Clinical School and Central Gippsland Health Service are placing final year students doing rotations in emergency medicine, medicine, anaesthetics and, for the first time in East Gippsland, aged care, based at the Heyfield Medical Centre and Heyfield Hospital.

On behalf of the East Gippsland Regional Clinical School I would like to thank everyone involved for assisting the students to get the most out of their clinical placements.

Jennie Casey

Student Placements

Year 1 and 2

One hundred and seven students will be in the Bairnsdale and Sale regions for short term rural placements.

Year 3B

Eight full time students based at the Sale campus and the Central Gippsland Health Service for the full academic year.

Year 4C

Eighteen full time students based in Yarram, Heyfield, Maffra, Sale, Bairnsdale, Lakes Entrance, Orbost and Omeo for the full academic year.

Year 5D

Ten students in Bairnsdale and seventeen students in Sale and Heyfield, all doing six week rotations, and great to see many are returning students from previous years.

Year 4C Education Report

2011 is the second year the Year 4C program has been delivered at the Sale campus. The eight students in the Sale program are all post graduate students who have been studying together for many years. This has allowed the students to get straight into their learning objectives without the distractions of establishing new friendship groups and working parties.

When commencing the year four program it is traditionally overwhelming for many students. Whilst they acknowledge the full workload and expectations of the course, they have taken it to like ‘ducks to water’. Within the first 10 weeks all students have managed to see and to be part of so many fantastic learning opportunities in both the obstetric ward and General Practice clinics. Week in review is always interesting as I listen to the student’s enthusiasm and interest in what they are learning and participating in.

This year the Sale program is fortunate to have the depth and breadth of many learned academics teaching various disciplines of the curriculum which has been a positive learning experience for the both myself and the students thus far. I look forward to both the students’ and tutors’ enthusiasm continuing throughout the year, as the program progresses.

Loy Perryman

Year 5C Education Report

Marnie and Loy finished their Year 4C education report in the 2010 Summer Edition of this newsletter by saying;

“We hope to see our 2010 students return to the area during their further studies…” and they have!

Dale Winzer has returned and started his year five rotation in the Emergency Department under the supervision of Dr Mark Pritchard.

Dale spent 2010 working with the staff at Cunninghame Arm Medical Centre in Lakes Entrance and at the School of Rural Health in Bairnsdale.

Dale tells me he has come back to East Gippsland because he ‘loves Bairnsdale’ and that the BPHS medical and nursing staff are friendly, supportive and very knowledgeable. He elected to do an emergency department rotation as ‘very soon I will be the intern needing to make the decisions’.

Dale says has been given many opportunities to expand his procedural and clinical skills and that he is enjoying the diversity of patients who present to the emergency department.

So thanks Dale for coming back and making Marnie’s and Loy’s wishes come true!

Deborah Hewetson
Research Report

It has been a busy few months for our research projects in East Gippsland. We are currently working on many projects ranging from evaluations of community health and education programs, to more clinical-based research projects. We are very fortunate to be able to collaborate with so many of the local health services and organisations in the East Gippsland region to work on research projects.

The evaluation of the Year 4B medical students, who undertook community engagement at the East Gippsland Specialist School over the past few years, is almost complete and is being written up as a manuscript to be published in a medical journal.

We have also had a journal manuscript published in the May edition of Nurse Education Today.

This study examined the learning styles of undergraduate nursing students.

Finally, we are excited to say that there are many East Gippsland health professionals and educators who are now undertaking Masters and PhD studies within the School of Rural Health. We are looking forward to supervising these students and working with them on their research projects which are addressing local rural health issues.

Angelo D’Amore and Eleanor Mitchell

Student Corner

My experiences in the labour ward

Hi. My name is Vichai and I am a Year C international medical student. I have the unique privilege of spending an entire year in Sale learning about Women’s Health, Children’s Health, General Practice, and Medicine of the Mind.

So far, I have had quite an eventful two months. In my first week, I witnessed two twin births, one natural and one Caesarian. I have been told I’m very lucky, seeing as one of the senior midwife educators has only seen one twin birth in her entire career! I have since witnessed three births and assisted with two.

The first time I saw a baby crowning, I was reminded of how amazing the human body truly is. From hormones that allow the birth canal to dilate to emotions that come with tears of joy (yes, even the fathers), the human form never ceases to astound me.

I remember the first time I witnessed a birth — every time the mother pushed, I would subconsciously hold my breath. I noticed

Vichai Chu

I wasn’t the only one – most first-time fathers did it as well! As much as I’d hate to admit it, the first time I heard a baby’s initial gasp nearly made me tear.

On my birthday, I had the privilege to witness a birth. That’s a very rare opportunity and I’ll bet my bottom dollar not many people get to say that in their lifetime. I tried to introduce my name as a possible name for the baby (I would have been happy even if just a middle name) but for some reason unknown, the parents found having a Caucasian baby with a Thai name was a bit odd. :)

Just recently, it was the first time I was hands-on with delivering a baby. Although I was eager to learn about delivering a baby, I was also very nervous. What if I drop the baby? What if I did something to cause the perineum to tear? Those were some of the thoughts that were running in my mind, along with the uncontrollably shaky hands, as I was standing next to the foot of the bed, ready to catch a baby. Things we learn from books and classrooms don’t make perfect sense until you experience it. For example, when babies crown, their heads mould into shape so that they can fit through the birth canal. I felt the friction of the baby’s skull bones slide across one another under my fingers! It was such a bizarre feeling. It’s surprising how babies are so fragile and resilient at the same time!

The labour ward offers much learning opportunities and I couldn’t have done all this without the help of the families, the midwives, and the doctors on the ward. Thank you for allowing my experience to be so enjoyable.

I look forward to more encounters.

Vichai Chu