

## Student paper

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The RAMUS Conference Placement Scheme gave me the wonderful opportunity to attend the 2013 National Rural Health Conference (NRHC), hosted by the National Rural Health Alliance. Held in Adelaide, the conference brought together over 1,000 multidisciplinary health professionals from across Australian and New Zealand to discuss, debate and prioritise pertinent health issues impacting on Australian rural and remote communities. In addition to hearing from amazing and inspiring speakers, it was a fantastic opportunity to speak with health professionals from across the nation about struggles and triumphs in their local communities.

At the NRHC I presented a paper, 'Supporting medical students on rural clinical placements'. This research was done as a part of my role as the Rural and Indigenous Officer on the Australian Medical Students' Association (AMSA) National Executive in 2012. This research explored students' perceptions on the supports available at Rural Clinical Schools across Australia. In recent years, there has been much research investigating what makes a good clinical placement, and the association between positive rural health exposure during a medical degree, student rural origin and desires to work in a rural location as a medical practitioner in the future. Presenting the paper was the culmination of a process which entailed learning about the research process, collaboration between organisations, and factors influencing student perceptions of their rural clinical school experiences. Presenting the paper was also a valuable opportunity to develop public speaking skills, particularly in relation to presenting research. It was also an opportunity to receive feedback on research methods, and directions for future investigation. Overall the presentation was received very positively with some helpful suggestions for areas which could be explored in the future.

At the conference I also participated in the Comfortable Chairs forum as a future rural health leader. This was a great opportunity to think in-depth about the future priorities of a particular topic (for me rural general practice) which would be debated on the night. Additionally, it also enabled us as young health professionals to meet current leaders in the rural health field (all current leaders had been Chairs of the National Rural Health Alliance) and to see the type of backgrounds and experiences which these leaders had. I think that often it is difficult to visualise the path that you want to take in your career, and to understand some of the journeys and experiences available to shape your development along the way. I found being able to learn about the current rural health leaders extremely valuable. I also really enjoyed meeting the other students who participated in the debates. These students were from multitude of multidisciplinary backgrounds and it was interesting to hear about their experiences and some of the other aspects of rural medicine which I am not exposed to. I was also lovely just to make new friends and to have a platform which facilitated networking with other students.

Another aspect of the conference which I particularly enjoyed was attending the RAMUS Scholars Lunch. This was a lovely opportunity to meet Susan in person after so many years of emails! It was also nice to meet other scholars, mentors and representatives from some of the rural health organisations. I would recommend attending this lunch to any RAMUS scholars attending rural health conferences.

As I have progressed through my medical degree I have become increasingly aware of the health inequalities which exist between rural and metropolitan Australians. My BMedSci research last year explored perceptions of the difficulties rural general practitioners face in delivering health care in extreme weather events. There were session at the conference focusing on extreme weather and health, and I found learning about other research in the area really interesting.

I am hoping that the multidisciplinary friendships and networks developed at the conference will continue into the future. Establishing support networks for rural health professionals is important in

maintaining and developing the rural workforce. It also fosters and encourages the need for excellence in policies, research and health care offered to rural communities.

Thank you for the opportunity to attend the National Rural Health Conference. The grant is much appreciated and I hope to apply the knowledge and skills that I learnt at the conference into rural practice in the future.