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Going Rural Health (GRH) is a Commonwealth funded program within The University of Melbourne Department of Rural Health. It is a rural clinical placement support scheme for nursing and allied health students, assisting students to have good rural experiences, with the ultimate aim of rural workforce development.

## AGED CARE

- Provision of allied health services previously very limited or unavailable
- Improvement in speech and communication
- Improvement in mobility and strength
- Improvement to resident lifestyle and wellbeing
- Implementation of Montessori principles
- Training volunteers to feed dysphagia residents – ‘Meal Mates’



**Case Study:**  
A depressed long term resident participated in activities and events, including a ‘Reminiscence’ group, developed and run by Occupational Therapy (OT) students. Facility nursing staff reported the resident showed greatly improved mood and increased motivation to participate in activities, improving the residents’ quality of life.



**Case Study:**  
Physiotherapy students worked in an aged care facility, providing education sessions to staff and residents, and also targeting falls prevention, assessing residents for the need for physiotherapy services, and setting up group exercise classes. Staff at the facility reported that the residents responded very well to the service, loved having the students there, and felt that the exercise classes were greatly enriched by the students.

## KINDERGARTENS & SCHOOLS

- Screening programs for developmental issues at early stage
- Therapy services
- Giving underprivileged children access to services
- Disability support

**Case Study:**  
OT students in a rural primary school developed a program for a 6 year old boy with Autism Spectrum Disorder (ASD) to enable him to focus his attention to specific learning tasks. The program incorporated movement breaks, deep pressure exercises and fine motor skill activities. At the end of 6 weeks, the boy made significant gains in focusing on and completing specific learning activities, and was able to recognise when he needed movement breaks, and could to communicate this effectively to his teacher. The OT students also developed an information package for school staff identifying key elements of ASD and practical strategies that could be employed in the classroom.



OT student activities for kindergarten children using play for therapy. Left: paper plates. Below: sock puppets.



**Case Study:**  
Speech Pathology (SP) students worked with a kindergarten to develop an oral language program to encourage staff’s utilisation of the resources developed and enable project sustainability. Teaching staff reported that they were now more aware of the relationship between oral language and literacy development, had learnt about the role of a SP in education settings, and are more confident to know when to refer to their local service.

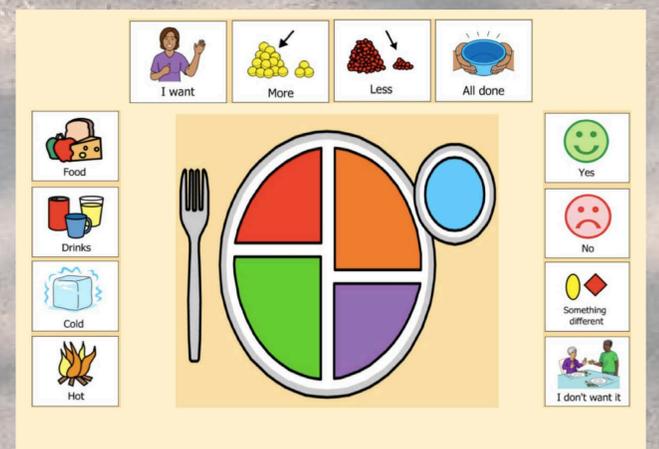
## COMMUNITY HEALTH SERVICES

- Waiting list reduction for outpatient physiotherapy services
- Teaching life skills to the homeless
- Mealtime assistance for disability services
- Assisting with rehabilitation exercise programs
- Follow up of no-show therapy outpatients via home visits
- Development of information brochures for patients

**Physiotherapy waiting list reduction:**  
A physiotherapy student – as part of her clinical placement – developed a plan to reduce a health services’ 3 year outpatient waiting list. The plan was approved by the hospital CEO and physiotherapy department, and implemented by subsequent students on placement. Within 3 months, the waiting list was reduced to less than 3 months, and doctors were again referring to the service. The case study below is an example of a patient who benefited from the plan.

**Case Study:**  
A patient had debilitating back pain that was affecting their ability to walk more than a few metres. After intensive therapy with Physiotherapy students, the patient is now walking more than 2km regularly.

**Case Study:**  
OT students developed and ran a life skills program for the homeless, for an organisation who did not employ an OT. The program included anxiety management, developing job-ready skills, shopping for healthy eating and preparing nutritious meals to ensure optimal health. GRH and the university jointly provided a local OT supervisor. The organisation saw such positive outcomes for clients they have employed their own OT to support students to continue to run the program.



Above: Mealtime Placemat developed by Speech Pathology students

**Case Study:**  
SP students worked with a rural disability service to improve mealtimes for clients. They developed and implemented a series of resources and recommendations including:

- A mealtime placemat (left) which outlined the mealtime needs of specific clients
- A training session for staff regarding safe mealtimes
- Filming a ‘gold standard’ mealtime assistance procedure

This led to increased client safety at mealtimes, increased staff skills and knowledge, improved mealtime procedures, & better identification of clients needing SP support.

## ACKNOWLEDGEMENTS

Thanks to our participating students, all the health service staff we work with, and ErixS (from Wikimedia Commons) for the use of the (slightly altered) background photo.