HIGHER PREVALENCE OF MANY RISK FACTORS FOR CHRONIC DISEASE IN REGIONAL AREAS

More than three-quarters of Australians have at least one chronic condition, says a report from the Australian Institute of Health and Welfare (AIHW).

In 2000-01 chronic diseases accounted for nearly 70% of the total health expenditure that can be allocated to diseases. Common examples of chronic conditions are asthma, which affects about 10% of the total population, osteoarthritis which affects nearly 8% of the population, and depression, which over 5% of Australians experience.

The report highlights that Australians are not doing enough about the lifestyle risk factors associated with chronic diseases:

- More than 85% of adults are not consuming enough vegetables.
- Almost 50% of adults are not consuming enough fruit.
- About 54% of adult Australians are either overweight or obese.
- Around 21% of adults smoke tobacco.

Compared with major cities, regional areas of Australia experience higher prevalence of many of the risk factors for chronic disease - smoking rates for example are 11% higher in regional areas.

Socioeconomic status also correlates with higher levels of smoking, physical inactivity and obesity. People who live in lower socioeconomic areas experience higher prevalence of chronic diseases such as diabetes, asthma, and heart disease, and have higher death rates.


WANT TO STAND UP FOR RURAL COMMUNITIES? REGISTER FOR ALBURY NEXT MARCH

Drought and the spectre of climate change have brought rural issues closer to centre stage, but where are we with rural health status and health services, and what are the health impacts of continued drought? What are the implications for rural people of current developments in health services, of potential changes in the structure of the health system, the shape of Medicare, how hospitals operate, the relationship between Commonwealth and State agencies, and an over-stretched health workforce?

If you are concerned with the well-being of country communities and the people who live in them, the 9th Conference in Albury is an opportunity to check progress and to reflect on successes, challenges and recent developments. Registration is open for the Conference, being held at Albury from 7-10 March 2007. Program and registration are available on-line at http://www.ruralhealth.org.au

Keynote speakers will include Robert Tickner, Secretary General and CEO of the Australian Red Cross; Rhonda Galbally, CEO of Our Community; Tony McMichael, Australia's leading researcher on the health effects of climate change; Philip Davies, Deputy Secretary of the Department of Health and Ageing; Brian Kelly, head of the NSW Centre for Rural and Remote Mental Health; Barbara Pocock, Director of the Centre for Work and Life at the University of South Australia; and former Head of the Department of Health, Andrew Podger.

There will be special workshops on managing chronic kidney disease in rural Australia; dementia; Indigenous health workforce solutions; rural scholarships; and the health benefits of physical skills for older people.

Murray Arts is working with the Alliance to guarantee a good program of arts in health, dealing with both its educational and therapeutic aspects.

Conference organisers will provide you with a very warm welcome and a well-managed event. In addition to the evidence you will hear, there will be a range of activities to ensure you are kept engaged. There will be an arts-in-health stream, an exhibition, networking time, and the opportunity to meet new and old friends.

Bring your views to Albury to help ensure that, as soon as possible, people in rural and remote areas have the same opportunities and the same health as people in our major cities.

There will be 100 contributed papers, from both experienced researchers and first-time presenters.

Eight formal pre-Conference events will be held, most of them on Wednesday 7 March, and details of these are also on the Conference website.
This important event should be accessible to most people, thanks to core support from the Department of Health and Ageing through its funding to the NRHA. Other supporters of the Conference include the National Health and Medical Research Council (NHMRC), NSW Health, the NSW Department of State and Regional Development, and the Toowoomba Hospital Foundation.

Early Bird Registration is $737 (with a special rate for enrolled friends of the Alliance) and is available until 15 December 2006.

Information and registration: http://www.ruralhealth.org.au/
Email: conference@ruralhealth.org.au

From: Jenny Macmillan
Subject: CHRONIC DISEASE MANAGEMENT: strengthening the primary health care approach

Presentations from the last weeks National Primary and Community Health Network forum in Brisbane together with the jurisdiction reports are now available at http://www.latrobe.edu.au/aipc/cdih/pchnetwork/national_conf_nov06/index.htm

From: Nicky Reavell
Subject: 9th Australian Palliative Care Conference - Call for Abstracts

Partners Across the Lifespan

Palliative Care Victoria in conjunction with Palliative Care Australia is hosting the 9th Australian Palliative Care Conference. It will take place at the Melbourne Convention Centre, Victoria Australia from Tuesday 28 to Friday 31 August 2007.

Abstracts are now being called for 20 minute oral presentations, 45 minute workshops, and/or poster presentations which incorporates the notion of the conference theme ‘Partners Across the Lifespan’.

All abstracts will be considered, however we encourage you to submit abstracts which address the conference theme and its sub-themes.

An online submission is now open at the conference website for ‘Call for Abstracts’

The conference website is www.iceaustralia.com/apcc2007

Palliative Care Australia
PO Box 24
Deakin West ACT 2600
Ph: +61 2 6232 4433
Fax: +61 2 6232 4434
http://www.pallcare.org.au

Manuscript submissions to The Australian Journal of Rural Health can now be made online through Manuscript Central. Easy and fast submission process; track the progress of your article at any time; safe and secure site. Simply log on to http://mc.manuscriptcentral.com/ajrh to submit your manuscript today and share the wealth of your knowledge. Full author instructions and guidelines can be found at the AJRH homepage - http://www.blackwellpublishing.com/ajr

The December 2006 issue of the journal is available online now at http://www.blackwell-synergy.com/links/toc/ajr. Articles include:
* Broken Hill experience: A comparison to the United States’ Area Health Education Centers' national network role and responsibilities in rural health
* Relationships between the health care sector and the media Daryl Pedler
* Value adding through regional coordination of rural placements for all health disciplines: The Broken Hill experience
* Farm-related injury event, social consequences and injury reporting in the Land Lantbruk newspaper in Sweden: A retrospective study of farm-related injury reporting during 2000–2005
* Total joint replacement surgery in a rural centre
* Suturing as an advanced skill for Registered Nurses in the emergency department
* Patient outcomes following an intervention involving community pharmacists in the management of depression
* Aeromedical evacuations from an east Arnhem Land community 2003–2005: The impact on a primary health care centre
* Managing patients at risk of deterioration in rural hospitals: A qualitative study
* A technically simple method for staining of acid-fast bacilli in cytology smears: An evaluation
* Short Report
* Letters to the Editor
* Book Review
* Grazings

RURAL BLUES? SPEAK TO YOUR FRIENDLY COMMUNITY PHARMACIST

Melbourne, Australia, 23 November 2006

Studies have shown that community pharmacists have a very important role to play in depression management. With 6% of Australians experiencing a depressive illness in any given year, psychological distress is now one of the most costly and increasingly acknowledged health issues experienced by the rural community. And it is even more important to manage community and personal stress levels during the current severe drought.
Blackwell Publishing – in the December 2006 issue of the Australian Journal of Rural Health – has published a study on the patient benefits of information and support provided by local pharmacists on the nature and management of depression.

The results lend support to the hypothesis that timely support provided by appropriately trained community pharmacists, working in conjunction with local doctors and mental health workers, helps to alleviate depression among people in rural areas.

Patients attach a great deal of importance to the receipt of good information about their medication – which means they are more likely to adhere to treatment. Pharmacists are excellently placed to be a ready source of this information – and because they are often the most readily accessible health professionals in rural communities, they are also in the position to provide regular patient follow-up during the first 2-3 months of drug therapy – again encouraging adherence to the treatment prescribed.

Lead author Dr. Judith Crockett said, "The data collected show that depression sufferers demanded greater information, improved support services and, most importantly, enhanced understanding of their experiences. Where this was provided, patients were more likely to remain on their medication and, as a result, were also more likely to experience improvements in their state of wellbeing. This study highlights the importance of having an integrated model of depression treatment and management – that is, community pharmacists working in conjunction with GPs and local mental health services, allied health workers – to provide best possible care under often difficult circumstances."

This initiative has the potential to alleviate some of the current burden on overstretched GPs and mental health services. In addition, the research provides the foundation for a larger research project incorporating a greater synergy among rural health services – a project including enhanced training of pharmacists in mental health and the increased involvement of local GPs.

"Such an interdisciplinary approach will definitely be welcomed by patients, their families and the communities alike", added Dr. Crockett.

---

Join friends of the Alliance in 2006. By joining friends you will receive the updated CD 'Rural and Remote Health Papers 1991-2005', a 2006 friends certificate, regular issues of PARTYline newsletter, and be eligible for a discounted registration at the 9th National Rural Health Conference to be held in Albury in March 2007. Membership of friends would also give you the opportunity to be involved more closely with the Alliance's information dissemination and policy work. You will become part of a group of people who contribute to and support the work of the National Rural Health Alliance.

RURAL AUSTRALIA MEDICAL UNDERGRADUATE SCHOLARSHIP (RAMUS) - APPLICATIONS OPEN

The 2007 RAMUS Application Round was advertised nationally on Saturday 11 November 2006. Applications close 5pm, Monday 22 January 2007.

The 2007 RAMUS Guidelines are now available on the RAMUS Scholarship page (http://nrha.ruralhealth.org.au/scholarships/?IntContId=15&IntCatId=7). The Guidelines include explanatory information on each question to assist applicants in completing the Application Form.

Applicants are encouraged to apply online and the online application form is now available from the RAMUS Scholarship page.

If you require further information, please contact the RAMUS Staff on 1800 460 440 (free call). If you are not able to apply online, download the Application Form, complete it in hardcopy and send to: RAMUS NRHA, PO Box 280, Deakin West, ACT, 2600.

- medical students Kimberley style
- core services close to home
- oral and dental health
- housing and remote podiary
- investing in remote communities
- choice and access in education
- fresh food and remote transport
- Rown Nicks Russell Drysdale Fellowship
- an Indigenous Outstations policy
- US recruitment and retention initiatives
- friends photographic festival
- 9th Conference update
- a photographic tribute to rural pets

From: Kelli Dopson
Subject: 18th Annual RDAQ Conference: Shifting Sands, Changing Tides: the next generation

18th Annual RDAQ Conference: Shifting Sands, Changing Tides: the next generation
7-10 June 2007
Rydges Capricorn Resort, Yeppoon

Join us on the Capricorn Coast for the Rural Doctors Association of Queensland Conference to develop your skills and have your say on the future of rural health. Topics include:
Workforce solutions
Maternity services
Medico-political forum
Indigenous women's health
Mental health
INDIGENOUS AUSTRALIANS FIND HEALTH SYSTEM EASIER TO ACCESS

Indigenous Australians are finding the health care system easier to access, according to a report issued on 15 November by the Minister for Health and Ageing, Tony Abbott, and the Minister for Human Services, Joe Hockey.

The report also highlights the value in continuing improvements such as the provision of Indigenous health content in the formal education and training of doctors, nurses and other health professionals.


LIFELINE’S JUST ASK - 1 300 13 11 14

Your Rural Mental Health Information Service

Lifeline’s Just ask is a rural mental health information service. Information provided includes: referral to services and web sites, printed material and a range of self help resources. The self-help resources focus on practical steps to help promote mental health in a range of areas. For information and copies of resources call or visit http://www.justask.org.au and further information is available at national@lifeline.org.au and http://www.lifeline.org.au

From: Rural Health Education Foundation
Subject: Satellite television broadcasts in the RHEF Dementia Series

Tuesday 21st November 2006 8pm AEDT
Presented by the Rural Health Education Foundation
An Australian Government Initiative

This program is the first of five satellite television broadcasts in the Rural Health Education Foundation Dementia Series.

The program provides up-to-date information on the dementia screening process, including who and when to investigate, taking a history and the various tools available.

Information on making the diagnosis will be provided in detail, including ruling out other possible causes for cognitive decline, language use with patients and power of attorney issues.

Management strategies for ongoing care and moving forward will also be covered.


BUSH CRISIS LINE - 1800 805 391

Bush Crisis Line is a twenty-four hour confidential telephone support and debriefing service for multi-disciplinary remote and rural health practitioners and their families. It is staffed by qualified psychologists with remote and cross-cultural experience, is toll free and available from anywhere in Australia. For more information http://www.bushcrisisline.org.au

NEW ARTICLES IN ‘RURAL AND REMOTE HEALTH’

‘Obstacles and solutions to maintenance of advanced procedural skills for rural and remote medical practitioners in Australia’
Procedural skills are an important component of rural medical practice. This article summarises what we currently know about the obstacles to maintaining such skills and how to overcome these.

‘Essential tips for measuring levels of consumer satisfaction with rural health service quality’
Evaluation of consumer perspectives is a crucial component of quality improvement in rural health. But are you aware of how different
evaluation methods may find different answers to the same question when used in rural communities? This article provides some helpful clues to navigating this important issue.

ACTION NEEDED ON INDIGENOUS DIABETES ‘CRISIS’ - ALP

The increasing incidence of diabetes in Indigenous communities in Australia is unacceptable and addressing this crisis should be a priority of government, according to Federal Opposition Health spokesperson Julia Gillard and Indigenous Affairs spokesperson Chris Evans.

"Reports today highlight the urgent need for greater investment in Indigenous primary health care to tackle the burden of chronic diseases such as diabetes.

"Type 2 diabetes is a major health problem for the Indigenous population:
· Indigenous people are around three times more likely than non-Indigenous people to have diabetes
· Indigenous people are more likely to suffer from complications of diabetes, such as kidney disease and diabetic retinopathy
· Indigenous people are more likely to die from diabetes than non-Indigenous people
· Indigenous people are less likely to have access to primary care and chronic disease management services.

The full text of the ALP statement is at http://www.alp.org.au/media/1106/msfcsheaia130.php

From: Don Perlput
Subject: SBS TV screens Aboriginal Health series from Rural Health Education Foundation

I am pleased to bring to your attention three Rural Health Education Foundation programs which will be screening on SBS TV soon.

SBS TV screens Aboriginal Health series from Rural Health Education Foundation

In November, SBS Television will broadcast three Rural Health Education Foundation documentary programs on Aboriginal and Torres Strait Islander peoples’ health issues.

The Start Strong (Tuesday 14 November) and Grow Strong (Tuesday 21 November) programs offer ideas for communities on what can work for them in improving maternal and infant care and early childhood development. Start Strong and Grow Strong highlight successful community-based initiatives such as Jirnani Childcare Centre on Nguiu (Bathurst Island), Darwin’s Strong Women, Strong Babies Strong Culture program, the Mums and Babies Program, Townsville Aboriginal and Islander Health Service and others.

The Keep Safe program (Tuesday 28 November) offers communities ideas on how to prevent injuries and showcases successful community-based initiatives such as the Hermannsburg (NT) Night Patrol, the Top End Women's Legal Service (Darwin) and the Western Australian water safety initiative Watch the Kids.

All three 26-minute programs are presented by Karla Grant, presenter of SBS TV’s Living Black.

SBS Television broadcast details:
Start Strong - Tuesday 14 November 3:30pm
Grow Strong - Tuesday 21 November 3:30pm
Keep Safe - Tuesday 28 November 3:30pm

From: Margaret McJannett
Subject: COSA ASM Update Register Now!

We invite you to join us for a COSA program with a definite difference as we join with the AH&MRC congress in Melbourne from 29 November to 1 December. This year’s meeting offers an exciting mix of science and practice through a combination of invited and abstract speakers. The commitment this year has been to offer a program predominantly organised around themes rather than disciplines which we hope will give us maximum time to benefit from COSA's multidisciplinary structure. There is a major focus on breast cancer this year and the breast group has worked hard to provide a program that will have wide appeal, with many of the topics relevant to the care of people with all types of cancers. The international speakers, Nora Kearney, Richard Sainsbury, Judy Garber, Nathan Cherny and Ciaran O'Boyle, will all be presenting at least twice and will be joined by a number of international speakers drawn from the overall AH&MRC program. Three of the main AH&MRC plenary speakers will take a cancer focus (Tuesday, Wednesday and Thursday) and will tailor their presentations to target a combined audience of scientists and clinicians, so take this opportunity to hear about the latest scientific developments in cancer care. While the ASM officially starts on Wednesday, remember that your full registration will allow you to attend the entire program from its start on Sunday evening. The ASM program also contains a number of pre-conference workshops focusing on consumers, cancer nursing education, communication skills and care coordination. Breakfast sessions have all been allocated to the Thursday morning to maximise your ability to enjoy the conference dinner on Thursday night without the expectation of an early rise. The updated program is now available on the COSA website http://www.cosa.org.au

Sanchia Aranda
Convenor

Margaret McJannett
Executive Officer,
Clinical Oncological Society of Australia
From: Relate Human Services
Subject: ACCFPP Conference 2007 - Call for Papers

You are invited to attend the second national conference for the Australian College for Child and Family Protection Practitioners in Melbourne - 19 to 21 May 2007 at the Victoria Hotel, Little Collins Street.

The conference theme “Borders and Bridges” reflects the broad contexts of Australian child and family practice. Diverse state data collection systems and differences in risk and safety assessment supply the foundation of a lack of systematic planning. Workforce roles are similar but skills and qualifications are not truly comparable. Different levels of non-government and government services across the three tiers of government add to the complexity. The ACCFPP aims to build bridges between agencies and professions to minimise the impacts of poverty and mental illness on Australian families and children.

The Conference secretariat is based at the Mackay Offices of Relate Human Services, PO Box 1401, Mackay 4740, Phone 07-49575400 Fax 07-49575488 Email: accfpp@bigpond.net.au http://www.relatehumanservices.com.au

On behalf of the organising committee we invite you to submit an abstract for evaluation for presentation at the Conference. Abstracts are due by December 31, 2006. Authors are invited to submit abstracts for oral papers, workshops and posters. The 250 word abstract should outline the aims and content of the presentation and must be submitted electronically. You must also identify your preferred presentation process but may be asked to consider an alternative format by the programme committee.

Early bird Registration closes 1 March, 2007

From: Michael Blair
Subject: Australian College of Mental Health Nurses 33rd Annual International Conference

The Australian College of Mental Health Nurses is to hold its 33rd Annual Conference in Cairns in 2007.

The theme for the conference, “Mental Health Nurses: Making Waves”, not only illustrates the tropical location of the 2007 conference, it is also intended to reflect the idea that historically derived factors influencing development in Mental Health Nursing, reach out and influence others with related concerns.

Waves convey ideas of movement and change. History evolves as events change. Its influence on the future changes with developments that are based on the “lessons learned” and experienced. As a wave rolls through, its predecessor is completely changed and yet waves are comprised of those that have come before. Our theme challenges presenters to address related topics. We know that mental health issues will remain important to communities and individuals in the years and decades to come. Mental health nursing is challenged to make waves and to be a key player in this expanding sphere.

The ACMHN Inc., through its national Conferences, local seminars, educational functions, scholarships and awards, has enjoyed a long and productive relationship with key sponsors. We hope that existing sponsors will take this opportunity to continue a mutually rewarding relationship, and that new groups will be inspired to join us.

The Web site URL for persons to express an interest in attending or sponsoring the conference is http://www.astmanagement.com.au/anzcmhc7/

All those persons that express an interest in attending via the web site will go into the draw for a free registration to the conference.

The conference will be held at the International Hotel in Cairns from the 8th to the 12th of October 2007.

Submission of Abstracts are called for and they may be submitted electronically via the Web site. You are invited to submit abstracts addressing topics including, but not limited to:
* Collaborations between sectors and service providers; academics and clinicians; consumers, carers and mental health professionals
* Innovations in mental health education
* Nurse-led practices and programs
* Rural, regional and remote mental health issues and service delivery
* Indigenous mental health
* Culturally relevant programs and practices
* Practice implications and recommendations from mental health research
* Specific mental health issues impacting on families, consumers, and carers across the lifespan.

For further information contact:
Mick Blair
Co-convenor
ACMHN Inc. 33rd International Conference 2007

---

From: Mcalpin, Susan
Subject: International Rural Network World Rural Forum

The International Rural Network World Rural Forum, India, Late Jan-Early Feb 2008: Innovation for Sustainable Local Development.

The main focus of the Forum will be on innovation in education, health, resource management, governance, and sustainable development to improve the quality of life of rural people and reduce rural poverty and social exclusion.

The forum will be based in the beautiful rural town of Udaipur, Rajasthan, which is also the home of IRN Board Member Lakshmi Murthy.

The Forum will involve five days, with at least one day (or equivalent) in local field visits to see the relevant work of NGOs etc. There are likely to be optional additional visits after the Forum either to the famous Institute of Rural Management in Anand, Gujarat and/or to the equally famous Birla Institute of Technology in Pilani, Rajasthan.

The date of the conference will be around the end of January or beginning of February 2008. If you are interested, please check out our website at http://www.International-Rural-Network.org and email Nicola.swan@btinternet.com to register your interest in keeping informed as soon as possible.

IRN Aims
Poverty and disadvantage is a common feature of rural areas and people across the world. This is explicitly recognised in the UN Millennium Development Goals. By providing a global forum for academics, practitioners, NGOs and policy makers concerned with sustainable rural development, education and health, the IRN aims to stimulate exchange of knowledge, experience and ideas, and create regional and global support networks. In this way it helps to develop a storehouse of knowledge and expertise on rural concerns, and to raise the profile and policy impacts of rural people, their NGOs and other organisations aiming for local empowerment, engagement, and supporting activities including policies.

---

CONTRIBUTION AND SUBSCRIPTION INFORMATION AND DISCLAIMER

The NRHA e-forum is edited by a third party moderator, Jim Groves. Contributions are sought on any topic relevant to rural health concerns. Please send contributions to the moderator at grovesc@winshop.com.au (do not “reply” to this email - send contributions to grovesc@winshop.com.au).

As such, the Alliance does not control postings and the contents do not necessarily reflect the opinions of the Alliance. Nor do postings necessarily reflect the view of Jim Groves or any organisation he is associated with. Jim Groves can be contacted at grovesc@winshop.com.au.

This issue is going to 2,544 email addresses. Please forward a copy to any colleague you think may be interested.