

network news

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Engaging with rural nurses

Mark Jones, Ministry of Health chief nurse, Kirsty Murrell-McMillan, Network Executive nurse representative, and Kim Gosman, Tuwharetoa Health Services, have toured the country visiting nurses in rural locations over the last twelve months.

The tour involved a series of visits to practices in the Southland and West Coast regions of the South Island and Northland in the North Island.

The visits were organised by the Network as part of an initiative to assist Mark in engaging with rural nurses, following regular meetings between Mark and the Network on issues affecting rural nurses at grass roots. Mark was able to hear first hand about the reality of nursing in rural and remote areas and the challenges and issues it presents.

The visits also provided a vehicle for Kirsty and Kim to seek feedback from nurses and practices as part of their rural nurse practitioner study (see page 2).



Stewart Island Health Clinic

November 2006 - Southland and Stewart Island

Mark's whirlwind tour of Southland began with a Powhiri at Murihuku Marae in Invercargill, followed by meetings with nurses working for iwi providers and nurses working for Southland DHB.

The party then flew to Stewart Island where they met with resident rural nurse specialists Deborah Dillon and Marty Peppers. Mark said meeting with the rural nurse specialists in their clinic gave him the opportunity to learn about their practice and gain a better appreciation of the issues faced by rural nurses working in an isolated island setting.

The Southland weather delivered four seasons in one day – from sunshine to snow – which meant Mark was able to experience what it was like to travel to and from the island in variable conditions.

December 2006/January 2007 - Central Otago, MacKenzie Country and West Coast

Following a schedule prepared by the Network, Mark travelled over 2,000km visiting nurses through Central Otago, MacKenzie Country and up the West Coast. Mark made this leg of the journey while on holiday with his parents who were visiting from the UK.

Travelling by car between practice boundaries gave Mark a real understanding of not only the isolation but the actual distances and practicalities involved in serving these rural communities.



Anna Guerin, Four Peak Health Geraldine

Continued over page



Mark and Te Hauora O Te Hiku O Te Ika team

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July 2007 - Northland

For this leg of the tour Mark, Kirsty and Kim were hosted by the Northern Rural General Practice Consortium, who had arranged a series of visits throughout the region. They met with a wide range of nursing groups throughout the region including some remote nurse-led clinics, rural general practices and nurse leaders. They were also fortunate to visit a number of iwi providers including Whaka Whiti Ora Pai, Te Tai Tokerau and Te Hauora O Te Hiku O Te Ika, amongst others.

"The tour was a wonderful experience. We were warmly received everywhere we went," said Kirsty.

"We are grateful to our nursing colleagues for sharing their practice with us so willingly. We learned a great deal and we felt privileged to meet so many dedicated rural health professionals."

The Network is grateful to Mark for making himself available to undertake the tour. The rural nurses visited appreciated the opportunity to meet Mark in an informal situation and share their practice - the good, the bad and the ideal.

Update on rural nurse practitioner study

Thank you to everyone who provided valuable feedback and insights to Kirsty and Kim as they toured the regions with Mark, gathering the views of rural nurses and practices.

Kim and Kirsty are undertaking, on behalf of the Network, a descriptive study of the issues affecting nurse practitioner recruitment and placements in rural New Zealand.

This stage of the study has focused on gathering information and consulting with stakeholders about the need for the project. The study has also included a detailed literature review both from a New Zealand and international perspective. In addition, last year Kirsty toured parts of the US (including Washington and Nevada) and Canada looking at live examples of nurse practitioners working in a rural setting.

The next stage of the study will seek further feedback from stakeholders through focus groups and an online survey.

The study aims to inform the Network about the need for locum nurse practitioners and give us a clear

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understanding of the demand for nurse practitioners in rural areas. It also aims to inform the Ministry of Health, DHBs, PHOs and iwi providers about issues, opportunities and barriers for nurse practitioners and the potential for development of nursing roles in rural communities.

Key performance indicators (KPIs) – locum and recruitment services

Short and long-term placements

For the quarter ended 30 September 2007, NZLocums delivered 564 sessions of short-term GP locum support to rural general practices around the country.

Permanent placements

During the quarter, NZLocums also made 29 permanent and long-term GP placements, 9 of whom were permanent. In addition, a further 3 GPs signed contracts to commence employment in rural general practice over the remainder of the year.

Key reasons for lower than usual delivery of short-term sessions include: smaller pool of locums being available than previously and an increased demand for short-term assistance due to a higher than normal winter illness rate amongst rural GPs – requests for sick leave are notoriously difficult to fill. Further, the over delivery against long-term contract, while pleasing, has undoubtedly contributed to an under delivery in the short-term contract.

Recent increase in short-term sessional rates

Critical to the delivery of the Network's strategic vision (to be universally acknowledged as New Zealand's pre-eminent rural health workforce support and advocacy organisation) and its contractual obligations to the Ministry of Health (to provide recruitment services to rural general practice for short term, long term and permanent placements) is a high quality pool of locums.

Over the past 12 months NZLocums, a division of the Network, has been experiencing increasing pressure from its pool of locums - a combination of NZ-domiciled, overseas trained and those in the pipeline - to increase

the sessional rate for short term placements. Over the last quarter this pressure has intensified such that several of our NZ-based locums have moved across to urban practices, where they are being offered between \$400+GST and \$600+GST per session, or have entered into private top-up arrangements with rural practices. At the same time, a good number of our overseas locums currently in the pipeline are deferring placements until we can assure them of a higher rate of pay.

Therefore, in response to current market (global) conditions and demand versus placement forecasts NZLocums has had to increase the sessional rate for all short term placements to \$400 (+/- the relevant taxation) per session, for all new contracts, as from 1 December 2007. All placement contracts signed and received prior to 1 December 2007, will be honoured at the old rate of \$300+GST per session.

The Ministry of Health has again stressed to the Network that additional funding to support the placement of locums and/or new practitioners in rural practice should be available through the Rural Recruitment and Retention Funding and/or the Reasonable Roster Funding streams and that practices wishing to explore these options should contact their PHO manager in the first instance (who should in turn speak to the DHB primary health care team).

For further information or assistance with identifying and/or accessing alternative funding streams please contact Sean Hill, Operations and Projects Manager on 0800 695 628. As always, we welcome your constructive feedback, in particular if your discussions with your PHO/DHB prove to be less than satisfactory.

Aotearoa Rural Health Apprentices report

In September the ARHA executive met in Wellington to review the year's activities and plan for 2008.

One of the issues addressed was our loss of momentum in the second half of this year. As a result, Brad Stone, our president, will be resigning his portfolios on other student associations to focus on rural health in 2008.

Slow but steady progress continues to be made for medical students interested in rural health, although progress is less apparent amongst nursing, pharmacy and allied health.

If ARHA is to continue to be involved in the changing face of rural health we will need to secure a sustainable funding source (cheques can be sent to our new treasurer Phillip Daniel, Christchurch School of Medicine).

In the last week of September the four regional rural health clubs took part in the inaugural national rural health week. The aim was to saturate students and faculty with rural health through a range of educational and social events. The week was incredibly successful and we hope to make it an annual event.

In 2008 executive member Sara Stantiall and I will be departing to take up PGY1 positions in Whangarei and Blenheim, respectively. Sad as we are to leave, the calibre of the new executive members is outstanding. They bring with them a fresh set of ideas and a renewed sense of purpose. You have not heard the last from either of us, as we will both be involved with next year's inaugural student rural health conference.

Other goals for 2008 include consolidation of an interdisciplinary membership, development of position statements on the ROMPE and RMIP schemes, gathering of outcomes data from the rural immersion programmes and supporting students to attend a range of rural health conferences in New Zealand and internationally, including the Network conference at which we will be presenting.

As always we appreciate the generous and unfailing support of the Network in achieving our goals.

Wishing you all the best for the summer season.

Misty Curry, Vice President, ARHA 2007

New recruits

NZLocums runs an orientation programme for all newly recruited overseas-trained doctors when they arrive in New Zealand, before they are placed in rural practices as short-term and long-term/permanent recruits.

The programme covers: New Zealand tax obligations; ACC; PHARMAC; Work and Income in New Zealand; medical indemnity and liability; resuscitation training and cultural orientation.

Some of our new recruits are:

- **Marshall Hinds (US)** has taken a six month placement at Featherston Medical Centre.
- **Suzanne Greaves (UK)** has accepted a permanent placement at Waihi.
- **Rurick Huebner (UK)** is working as a roving locum, starting at Central Medical in Oamaru.
- **Jason Fang (UK)** has taken a four month placement at Otaki Medical Centre.
- **Annabelle Mascott (UK)** is working as a roving locum for five months, starting at Kerikeri Medical Centre.
- **Todd Woollen (US)** has taken a four week placement at Puhi Kaiti in Gisborne.
- **Lailani Mondares (Philippines)** has accepted a long-term placement at Church St Surgery in Opotiki.
- **Bruce Smith (US)** has taken a nine month placement at Moerewa Medical Centre.
- **Richard Potman (Netherlands)** has accepted a permanent placement at Waiuku Medical Centre.
- **Alex Michel (Germany/Ireland)** is working as a roving Locum, starting at Waimate Medical Centre.
- **Amar Anand (Germany)** has taken a six month placement at Tirau Family Practice in Putaruru.
- **Philip Hamilton (UK)** has taken a long-term placement at South Hill Family Practice in Oamaru.
- **Tim Goltz (US)** has taken a three month placement at Gore Medical Centre.
- **Justin Harrell (US)** is working as a roving locum for eight months, starting at Broadway Health Centre in Kaikohe.

Did you know...?

...a useful resource for rural practices is the internet based service HealthyPractice™, developed by Medical Assurance Society.

HealthyPractice™ is an online business support service backed by a 0800 helpdesk staffed with skilled and experienced practice managers. They are supported by legal and financial specialists who know the general practice business environment well.

The website has information on every aspect of practice ownership and management. While there is plenty of generic information out there for practice managers and owners there is often a frustrating lack of relevant information when it comes to the nuts and bolts of running a busy and complex general practice.

HealthyPractice™ covers all areas of practice business management and some of the features include:

- user-friendly site, simple navigation and search function
- content written by business experts and customised for general practice
- WORD templates you can download and use eg position descriptions and employment agreements for GP, nurse, receptionist etc
- financial toolkit of calculators to help with budgeting, business planning (incl. "fees review") and benchmarking your practice
- resources to assist with RNZCGP Cornerstone practice accreditation

- regular subscriber newsletter with new and updated website content
- simple, all inclusive, low cost annual subscription
- multi-user, 24/7 access – one licence per practice and all authorised users with internet access can use HealthyPractice™ anytime, anywhere

If your practice does not use this service and you are interested in finding out more about HealthyPractice™ visit www.healthypractice.co.nz or contact the MAS Business Advisory team on 0800 800 MAS (627).

NZLocums, a division of the Network, receives funding from the Ministry of Health to provide the following services to general practices with a Rural Ranking Score (RRS) of 35 or greater:

- recruitment for short-term locum cover – allowance of 20 sessions per GP (FTE) per year
- recruitment for long-term cover
- permanent recruitment

NZLocums also offers a range of complementary services to support practices in recruiting and retaining GPs. Talk to us today – we're here to help!

Visit our website www.nzlocums.com or freecall 0800 695 628 (0800 NZLOCUMS).

Perfect environment for a working holiday

Wide open spaces, boys getting lost in the paddocks and a friendly community are some of the fond memories that GP Darren Fox and his family have taken back to Australia.

Darren spent three months as a locum at Kurow Medical Centre, in north Otago, after stumbling across NZLocums on a google search.

"My wife was on maternity leave, so we decided it would be a great opportunity to raise our little baby and our three boys away from the hustle and bustle of the big city for a while," said Darren. "We had been to New Zealand a few times before and thought that the environment would be perfect."

Darren was delighted with the help NZLocums provided, not only in securing his placement at Kurow, but also in helping the family to find a place to live and a vehicle, and to settle into the community.

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"The whole placement has been more than we could have hoped for. The location was spectacular, the house with its farm was just wonderful for the kids and the whole community was extremely supportive. Jo and I have felt very spoilt."

He said being fans of the outdoors, the family loved the rural lifestyle, especially the boys.

"They really loved the novelty of living

on the farm. They loved causing their mother some anxiety getting lost in the paddocks after school," he said.

NZLocums Candidate Manager, Sara Williams, said the practice was very grateful to Darren.

"He was able to step into the practice at short notice after their resident, and only, GP resigned in June," said Sara. "We're extremely thankful that he decided to come here."

Darren also found that the community was very welcoming.

"The first five minutes of an appointment were often taken up with the patient thanking me for being there. Rural communities really value having medical services available to them," he said.

After working at a surgery with 17 doctors in Melbourne, Darren found solo practice in Kurow significantly different.

"In the city there are specialists, imaging and other services at your fingertips. In rural communities you just



Darren Fox at Ohau ski field

don't have access to those things. But the support team at Kurow Medical Centre are second to none, they do a great job!"

During their stay the Fox family had a chance to experience true rural hospitality when one of them had to spend some time in Dunedin hospital.

"The community was wonderful. We were well looked after with continuous support, meals were delivered to us and there were plenty of babysitting offers," he said.

While the family have returned to Australia, they are already thinking of coming back to New Zealand.

"We will definitely be back for a holiday and there is a distinct possibility that we may come back to work for a longer period of time," said Darren.

The first five minutes of an appointment were often taken up with the patient thanking me for being there. Rural communities really value having medical services available to them, he said.

Executive member profiles

Western North Island

John Burton has had a long-standing involvement with the Network since its inception and has contributed to a number of rural health projects. After a break John is now back on the Executive as representative for the Western North Island region.



"I was on the Executive a number of years ago and then I had some time off. I feel it is time to do my share again," said John.

John has been a solo rural GP at the Kawhia Health Centre for the last 15 years.

"It's a small community with a high percentage of Maori. There are great opportunities for me to be involved in the community in this town and make a difference to people's health needs," he said.

John feels that there have been some significant improvements in the Network since the last time he was on the Executive.

"The Executive Board works together in an efficient, collaborative way, and of course, NZLocums is now an integral part of the Network's business. Lots of the things that we discussed in the early days have been put in place and the Executive is definitely on track."

John also thinks that the current Government is doing its part for rural health. However, he is concerned about ongoing workforce issues, particularly surrounding after-hours health care.

Traditionally GPs saw afterhours work as a service to their patients. As resources are improved, it is vital that the focus on patients doesn't get lost, and that we can still feel we are doing something worthwhile.

Contact John on: 07 871 0884 (practice); email kawhia.hc@paradise.net.nz (practice) and burtonjs@clear.net.nz (home).

Northern South Island

Martin London, who works in five different clinics throughout the West Coast, was one of the members of the first Executive in 1992. He hopes his return to the Executive, representing the Northern South Island, will provide a historical perspective on the role and help retain the original visions of the Network.



"I hope that by letting new members of the Executive realise how we got started, we can help preserve the original values while still moving forward."

Martin believes that the retention of rural GPs and nurses is one of the most important issues for the industry. He thinks that work needs to be done to get Government, DHBs and PHOs to focus on the retention of the rural health workforce rather than the recruitment.

"There are serious cases of rural GPs and nurses becoming burnt out and we want them to be able to leave when they choose and not just when they feel they have to. We also don't want students at teaching practices to see over-stretched and over-tired practitioners."

Martin says the level of education provided at rural practices is great to see, but he feels that there needs to be sufficient resources available.

"Teaching practices need to stay sharp and fresh. More people have the capacity for being involved, but they need to be resourced properly."

Martin would like to see more young doctors involved in the Network at Executive level.

"We need to keep our eyes open for people who are prepared to make a stand and start to involve them. This will develop a group of new people that could come on to the Executive so that we don't get the same old people continuously doing the same jobs."

Contact Martin on: 03 756 1080 (practice) or 027 464 1191; email londonz@xtra.co.nz.

In Memoriam



Rod Devlin

Rod Devlin, executive director of the MedicAlert Foundation, sadly passed away in early October. Rod was a dedicated supporter of the Network's conference for many years and was, in fact, our first exhibitor to register for the 2007 conference.

The Network Executive and staff extend their condolences to Rod's family and the team at the MedicAlert Foundation.



Network Annual Conference & Expo

Fri 28 – Sun 30 March 2008

The Network's first Annual Conference was held in the early 90s and has evolved to become the nation's major annual rural health event; attracting delegates and exhibitors from all over New Zealand and from overseas.

YOU ARE INVITED to attend and **ENJOY** the unique experience and camaraderie of the rural health community; **TAKE ADVANTAGE** of quality continuing professional development opportunities. **JOIN us 28-30 March 2008** at Christchurch Convention Centre, Christchurch, New Zealand for the best line up yet!

CHECK OUT the programme on the Network's conference page www.rgpn.org.nz and **WATCH for registration details, social event details, and partners' and children's programmes** early in the New Year. Enquiries: pamm@rgpn.org.nz.

www.rgpn.org.nz

Working together, doing it better

Membership is at the heart of what we do!

Are you a Network Member "working together to do it better?"

- Make extra savings on early bird conference registrations and ensure your membership is current and financial
- Have your say about rural health issues of meaning to you at the conference members' only breakfast forum
- Be eligible to vote in the Executive Board Elections and AGM



The Network's membership database is currently being updated. In the process annual subscription invoices have been posted for the 2008 year. If you have not received your invoice, need to make changes to your contact details or wish to become a member please refer to the **enclosed membership application and records update form**. You may like to make a few photocopies for your colleagues first? Membership enquiries can be made to membership@rgpn.org.nz.

Sensing a Medal?



Dr Peter Snow (1934 - 2006)

- Peter Snow Memorial Award nominations close 31 January 2008.
- Rub shoulders with the worthy recipient and other colleagues passionate about rural health at the conference cocktail function, Christchurch Convention Centre, Friday night 28 March 2008. Entry is free to conference delegates.
- It's easy and timely to make a nomination. Download a nomination form and check out the background and criteria on www.rgpn.org.nz.

Enquires: pamm@rgpn.org.nz.

AGM Notice & Executive Board Elections

The Network's Annual General Meeting will be held during the 2008 Network Conference on Saturday 29 March 2008 at the Christchurch Convention Centre.

A major agenda item for the 2008 AGM will be the Executive Board Elections. Information about the AGM and Elections will be provided to members in advance of the conference.

Network News has changed frequency to quarterly. Look out for the next issue in your mailboxes in autumn.

Happy New Year and a safe and enjoyable 2008
From the Network Executive Board and Team

*Contact the Network at network@rgpn.org.nz
if you would like to receive our newsletter and/or e-zine.*