

RUSTICA Rambler

Issue 1, 2007

President's report

This first half of the semester has been jam packed with great events. I'd like to report an excellent participation by the first years – keep it up guys!

So far, we've managed to achieve most of our goals for this year - holding Nursing events, promoting ourselves to the Paramedic students, and holding top notch activities to keep the rest of you interested.

Rustica was also fortunate enough to be able to send 10 of its members to the 9th National Rural Health Conference and the National Rural Health Network (NRHN) Forum in Albury this March, courtesy of the NRHN and the NRH Alliance. In the midst of emotionally fraught presentations and the serious rural health issues being raised, we all managed to have a very good time, mingling with an assorted bunch of health students from all over the nation. I recommend this once in a lifetime experience to anyone interested in rural health.

We've also been pursuing more serious matters - such as that of the Bonded Medical Places Support Scheme, the design of the new building, and staying in communication with the Academic Rural Health Advisory Group.

What can we look forward to in the next half of this semester? The revamp of the Rustica website, Mental Health Day, Skills Night and a brand spanking new event – Indigenous Awareness Camp. Keep an eye out!



Sandy and Julz at the NRHN Conference

Vice President's report.

Hi there! Sandy here (aka the 2007 RUSTICA Vice President). Well, what a year it has been so far for RUSTICA!

The year kicked off with O'Day for the 1st year Med crew (see my report a bit later on), which was a huge success (we signed up about 20 members).

Next came the NRHN (national rural health alliance) forum, which was held in Albury at the start of March. 10 RUSTICA members (including yours truly) travelled to Albury to meet over 300 other delegates from the nineteen rural health clubs across Australia. We also attended the 9th biennial NRHA (national rural health alliance) conference where we worked with health professionals with an interest in rural practice. At the end of the conference, a list of recommendations were drafted, to be sent to the Dept. of Health and Ageing. To hear more about this, see the NRHN report on pages 4-5!

Rustica Welcome, 2007.

The RUSTICA welcome was held at the Black Prince on the 23rd of March, 2007. As RUSTICA welcomes had a reputation for spectacularly flopping, we were determined to



make this years welcome a success. And a success it was, with about 65 people attending (55 up from last year), including about 20 new members signing up on the night.

All who attended were treated to a marvellous meal, and plenty of drinks were had by all. Also on display were many of RUSTICA's publications, including some newly acquired material from the 2007 NRHN (National Rural Health Network) forum.

The lucky door prize, an original Aboriginal art piece purchased from ArtMob, was won by Todd Mason of Med IV.

Many thanks go out to our new first year (med) reps who managed to recruit almost 30 attendees from their year level and the Pharmacy reps, Anita and Gale who brought along 9 of their pharmacy friends.



Electives Night

Electives night this year was a combined event between Rustica and IMPACT and was held on the, 28th March 2007. Over 120 students attended to hear some fantastic presentations from people who have recently been on electives or ASU. These ranged from many places throughout the world, to more local Australian presentations from Tom Volkman (NTGPE Central NT), Katie Maver (NTGPE Top End NT) and Golsa Adabi (RHH DEM).

After the presentations, everyone enjoyed some fantastic food in club med. The evening was generously sponsored by MDAV, MIPS, UMP and MDAN.



Tom Volkman – with kids from the Binjari Community (near Katherine, NT), 2006 – Tom's presentation will soon be uploaded to the Rustica website (www.rustica.healthsci.utas.edu.au)

Scholarships Night

Rustica's annual Scholarships Night took place on Thursday 15th March. The evening kicked off at 5.30pm, allowing students to hear presentations, talk to presenters and eat dinner all by 8pm - a welcome change from the usual late nights!

This year's speakers were:

- Rustica Bursaries, ASU/Honours Bursaries – Diane Lim (Med III)
- UTAS and Commonwealth Scholarships – Eoin Breen (UTAS Scholarships Office)
- Defence Force Scholarships – Sgt Josh Page & Cpl Ryan Haslan (Army)
- MDAV & GPTT Scholarship for Expedition Medicine – Graeme Wormell (MDAV)
- John Flynn Scholarships – Claire Grist (ACRRM); Katherine Ngo (Med III)
- AMSA Electives Bursary – Marion Davies (Med V)
- RAMUS (Rural Australia Medical Undergraduate Scholarships) – Matt Van Zetten (Med IV)
- Conferences of National Significance, MRB Support – Emma Mitchell (Med IV)

Following the presentations, students were treated to gourmet sandwiches, sushi and fruit courtesy of MDAV. The evening was a great success, with around 30 students attending. Students were able to pick up pamphlets on the scholarships, and information was emailed to all pharmacy and medicine students for the benefit of those unable to attend the night.



NRHN conference Academic Program **By Sandra Zammit**



From the 5th – 6th of March 2007, I attended the 2007 NRHN conference in Albury. This event was attended by over 300 delegates, all members of the NRHN who are members of at least one of the nineteen rural health clubs across Australia. The delegates came from all disciplines, including nursing, medicine, pharmacy and allied health. This event was funded by the department of health and ageing.

The theme of the conference was ‘staying strong – thriving in the bush,’ its focus was on maintaining mental healthiness as both a rural student and practitioner. Speakers included Janie Dade Smith, a remote area nurse with years of experience, Jeff Kennett, the former Victorian Premier and current chairman of Beyond Blue and Sarah Chunys, the 2004 NT young Australian of the Year.

The conference also comprised of a series of workshops and seminars. I attended various workshops on ‘how to run a rural health club.’ As a new member of the RUSTICA executive, these seminars proved invaluable in providing practical tips on how RUSTICA can run more smoothly and efficiently, as well as getting some interesting ideas on some events which RUSTICA could host in the future, such as mental health day.

The conference was an incredibly positive experience – the energy from the delegates was amazing, it was very well organised and the hosts were incredibly hospitable. The

forum allowed us to form networks with other members of the 18 other rural health clubs; allowing us to continue to exchange ideas and contacts for the future.

Next, I attended the 9th biennial NRHA conference. Attended by 1200 delegates, from many organisations, professions and demographics, the aim of this conference was to develop policy recommendations regarding rural, remote and indigenous health, and, similar to the NRHN conference, aimed at giving delegates an opportunity to form networks and contacts.

A major focus of the forum was the idea of ‘arts in health.’ The conference was drizzled with touches of acrobatics, singing, dancing and theatre. All of the performances had a health focus; the flying fruit bats were occupational therapy patients enrolled in an acrobatic program, the indigenous theatre group ‘chopped liver’ presented a play on Hepatitis C; the theatre company ‘Somebody’s daughter’ focuses on mental health and social issues surrounding underprivileged children and adolescents.



The main things which I have learned from this forum were:

A – The current state of indigenous health – currently, the life expectancy of indigenous Australians is 17 years less than other Australians. It is realistic to expect that this can change in the near future; drawing from examples from New Zealand and the USA; who have reduced the gap in life expectancy significantly in the past ten years.

B – the role of arts in health is an unproven yet valuable addition to a patients health and

well being, as well as being a valuable tool in providing health education, such as safe sex messages and raising awareness.

C – that rural health programmes need to continue in it's endeavours to include a multidisciplinary approach in order to achieve the maximal health outcomes for rural and remote patients.

The attendance of these two conferences has renewed my passion for rural health. I will endeavour, through RUSTICA, to bring the rural health message to all members. Some plans that the delegates have made for this year are:

- a mental health night – providing a mini NRHN forum for members
- making all the resources acquired from the forum available to RUSTICA members
- monitoring a new support scheme which has just been implemented for bonded medical students.



Social Program Report, by Matthew Van Zetten

What can I say, 5 nights of drug and alcohol fuelled fun and frivolity (nicotine counts as a drug right???). The evenings were fantastically organised – kudos to the social committee, even if some of the alcohol was over priced.



With a different theme every night, it was hard to say no. The nights were:

1. Quiz night – There were questions, we didn't know enough of answers. We also got the chance to follow in Mugatu's footsteps and design our own derelict clothing from newspapers. Check out the picture of one of the more risqué designs.



2. Club performance night – All the UTAS students did a spectacularly choreographed performance to the Beatles – Octopuses garden. Unfortunately the judges decided to award victory to the team with the most nudity rather than artistic skill.
3. NRHA cocktails and Uni night – A sample of the nightlife in Albury, and a chance to meet and greet some rural health professionals. Lots of Karaoke singing by Rustica treasurer Tierney and myself.



4. Formal dinner – Great night if you are into \$5 beers and \$20 bottles of

wine. Otherwise a little pricey, although the Irish pub was good afterwards.



5. Barn dance – Nice food, good band, and great dancing from all those who had the cojones to try some authentic bush dancing. A very sweaty group continued on to a 'wine and cheese' party hosted by some Tassie boys.



So what did I learn in my week on the big Island? Many things:

- The Chicky-Chicky dance rocks – check it out on you tube.
- Don't act out a dramatic fall to the ground on carpet, especially drunk. Large carpet burns hurt like hell and leave big scars.
- Kiwi's suck at poker.
- Albury's 1:30 lockout policy sucks, especially when you've popped a couple of no-doze's right before being kicked out.
- Health professionals/students need to be more inter-disciplinary. Could that

be better explained? Yes. Am I going to do that? No.

TEN DAYS ON THE ISLAND - QUEEN OF THE SNAKEPIT PERFORMANCE

As part of the "10 Days On the Island" Festival, RUSTICA sent along 4 students to the world premiere performance of "Queen of the Snakepit", starring Cheryl Wheatley. Born and raised on Flinders Island, Cheryl gave us a interactive and theatrical insight into life and family on the island. Enjoyed by all! Watch out for more ATSI related performances!

RUSTICA upcoming events

Skills night – Wednesday 2nd May

Mental health night - TBA

ATSI trip – 19th-20th May

Reconciliation week – 27th May – 3rd June (see www.reconciliation.org.au)

Don't forget to check out our ever improving website @ www.rustica.healthsci.utas.edu.au.

